MORNING THOUGHTS;

DEVOUT MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR

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OR,

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By R. J. C.

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PREFACE.

THE man who has been born again, and made a partaker of the life of the Risen Saviour, is to be wholly consecrated to the service and glory of God. His calling is, that his "whole spirit, and soúl, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Accordingly, he is to worship and glorify God, not only in his outward actions, but in his inmost thoughts and affections. His prayer must ever be, "Let the words of my mouth, AND THE MEDITATION OF MY HEART, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer."

The present Volume is offered in the hope and prayer that, with God's blessing upon its use, it may present materials for daily solemn meditation; and especially that, being read in the morning, the mind may be so furnished as to be kept from vain and unprofitable thoughts throughout the day.

In the constant remembrance that Christ is the Head of the whole Church, and hath a care for all the members of His Body, this Volume is designed for the benefit of Christians, with whatever portion of the Church Catholic they may be connected.

Yet, having been prepared by a Son and Minister of the Church of Scotland, it is brought unto her as a token of his loyalty and affection. His fervent prayer on her behalf is, that God may evermore abundantly bestow upon her the gift of the Holy Ghost, and that, faithfully preaching Christ, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, she may be enabled to present her children perfect in Christ Jesus.

R. J. C.

M——, 1868.

MORNING THOUGHTS.

JANUARY 1.

"*This I say, brethren, the time is short.*"—1 Cor. vii. 29.

Very solemn to the Christian is the opening of a New Year. The years that are past bear witness to the goodness and forbearance of God. They bear witness also to our frailty and unfaithfulness. God is preparing to bring to pass that for which all creation waiteth in expectation—even "the manifestation of the sons of God." But are we, the sons of God, allowing God to prepare us for the realisation of this hope set before us? Our first parent, who was set at the head of God's creation to have dominion over it, brought himself under its dominion when he ate of the forbidden fruit; and man ever since has been under strong temptation to yield himself to the power of earthly things and earthly relations. Business claims a most undue proportion of time, thought, and talent. Pleasure makes most unreasonable demands upon the enjoyments and necessities of a man's being, to the gratification of that selfish will which we are to crucify. Relationships and friendships call for a share of attention and affection quite disproportionate to our responsibilities, and to the seduction of our souls from the hope of Christ's speedy appearing. Let us not put ourselves in bondage to the things of sense—to the fashion of the world, which passeth away. "The time is short." "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

JANUARY 2.

"Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them."—MATT. xviii. 2.

IT is not once, or incidentally, that the Lord speaks of the spirit of a little child as essential to our obtaining the kingdom. He does it in a very marked manner. He not only teaches the doctrine, but, to enforce it, He places a little child before the eye. The instruction in the incident before us is large; but there are one or two features in the character of a child that will help to bring out this our calling to "become as little children." A child is totally devoid of the spirit of judging, and so we must obey the injunction, "judge not," remembering "there is One that judgeth." A child is totally devoid of evil-speaking, so must we "speak evil of no man." A child is totally devoid of any plans of its own, so must we ever say, "not our wills, but Thine be done." A child's joy is in being in the company and under the eye of its parent, so must our joy be, ever to be under the eye of God, and under the shelter of the "covering wings" He spreads over us in the family, in the state, and in the Church. A child weeps when its parents leave it, and leaps for joy on again beholding them, and so must we sorrow at the hiding of God's countenance, and rejoice when He revealeth Himself to us again. A child dreams not of helping itself, it leans entirely on the parents to help it, so must we be ever dependent upon God. To do these things is natural to a child. But now that we are grown up, they have become difficult to *us*. To "become as little children" requires a labour of self-discipline and humility. O Lord, evermore give us the spirit of Thy Holy Child Jesus!

JANUARY 3.

"*Separate from sinners.*"—HEB. vii. 26.
"*Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.*"—PSALM xvi. 10.

THE Jews were dedicated, cut off, separated to be a holy nation unto God. But they fell away from their calling and position; they were not faithful. Jesus was dedicated, cut off, separated to be holy unto the Lord. He maintained His standing; He was faithful to His calling. Being separate *unto* God, He was separate *from* sinners. On earth He had no sympathies with that in which the men of the world rejoiced. His habits of thinking were apart from all that was customary among men. He thought, acted, spoke, as God willed He should think, act, and speak. And when He died, His body lay not in the grave subject to corruption. His life was pure, His grave was therefore uncorrupt. The Holy One saw no corruption. Let us, who are looking for deliverance from a body of sin, trace this sound connection. If this "mortal is to put on immortality, and this corruptible to put on incorruption," then must we be separate from sinners. If we are to have part in the "first resurrection," then must we be holy unto the Lord. Are we now cut off from the will and lusts of the flesh? Are we holding ourselves as so separated to God, that we can no more go on in the spirit that is actuating, or in the lust that gratifies, the flesh? We must be ever consigning the "old man" to death, we must be ever manifesting that the "new man" is being formed within us. Then, when Christ "shall appear, we shall be like Him."

JANUARY 4.

"*When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called* Jesus."—LUKE ii. 21.

THE name given to the Lord was "*Jesus*," or Saviour. This is a name endeared to us by its very sound; a name endeared to us in remembrance of that Jesus, or Joshua, who brought the people from the wilderness side of Jordan into the smiling and green fields of the Land of Canaan; a name endeared to us by the abiding conviction that He is ever "Jesus," ever proving Himself our daily Saviour from innumerable evils. He has carried that name with Him into the heavens. He got it when he was circumcised on the eighth day, but He proved it in very deed when He rose from the dead. In circumcision He was separated as the Elect One to do the will of God; in His resurrection He was separated from corruption, no more to return to it. As the possessor of eternal life, He became, by His resurrection, the dispenser of it to others; as the head of a regenerate race, He makes us partakers with Him in the life He now lives. Thus He is the Saviour. But we are united with Him, that we may become Saviours. We fail in our personal responsibility, in our high calling, if we fail to go out and in, day by day, working salvation for men. Oh! may our heart's desire ever lead us to honour "*Jesus*," may we be ever found telling out all the riches of that name—Saviour!

JANUARY 5.

"*I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly.*"—ROM. xii. 3.

THE second chapter of St Luke's Gospel affords two remarkable illustrations of this apostolic charge from the example of our Lord. We have there an evidence of the most gifted of all men thinking soberly of Himself. We find Him getting instruction from the doctors, and again we find Him casting Himself upon the protection of His parents. Neither was done for mere effect. Both were essential for fulfilling His Father's business; both were needful for His growth and stature in wisdom. He was by the doctors taught in the Word of God; He was, by His submission to His parents, disciplined in spirit. God dealt to the doctors a measure of grace, and Jesus drew from it to the nourishment of His spiritual being. Having once come into the condition of the creature, He obeyed the laws thereof, and so, as one who needed to be sustained, declared His creaturely dependence upon God. The more God's Spirit moves in the most able or gifted of His children, the more shall we find them doing likewise, and reverencing every man and every ordinance of God as containing some help and grace whereby strength may be administered from God to the poor and needy. But to think soberly is the very opposite of the excitement of this age. The temptation of all is to live independent of the grace which God has dealt to every man. The opposite of sobriety is excitement. And does anything mark this generation more than headiness and excitement. Why? Because men realise not how weak and vain they are.

JANUARY 6.

"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."—JOHN i. 9.

VERY often is Jesus spoken of under the designation "Light." It is said, "The Life was the Light of men." Again, "I am come a Light into the world." Again, "Yet a little while is the Light with you." Again, "The Lamb is the Light thereof;" and similarly in many other passages of Holy Scripture. Of the true Light they who are regenerated are made partakers. The Light of God is among us, not the light of the sun or the moon or of the stars, but emphatically "*the Light*" Himself. And through our union with and incorporation into Him, we are made children of the light, and not of the darkness. When we adore and praise God for the entrance into the world of the "True Light," let us renew our gratitude to Him that He hath made us children of the day, and not of the night. Let us put off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Let us be deeply penitent, too, that we have stumbled, yea, and do still stumble in the darkness, as if we never had been made partakers of the light. Let us henceforth be ever found putting ourselves in God's hands, that He may strengthen us to walk in the light. Let us be in all our ways burning and shining lights, giving testimony that there is One who will speedily come again to lighten all the earth.

JANUARY 7.

"*Give us this day our daily bread.*"—MATT. vi. 11.

GOD fed the people of Israel in the wilderness with manna from heaven. They received it every day as "daily bread." And because it was to be given them as "daily bread," they were warned not to keep any of one day's provision until the morning. But the wayward flock disobeyed, and that which came down from heaven to feed Israel stank and bred corruption. Their unbelief, their want of faith in God's promise, turned that which was given to sustain life into what was useless and injurious to life. We possess no earthly food which can nourish the spiritual life, but are dependent upon what God sends from above. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life," "the true bread that came down from heaven." On Him do we feed, on Him as daily ministered to us by the Holy Ghost in the various means of grace, and especially in the ordinances of instruction and holy worship, and in the blessed sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Yet let us remember that this Living Bread from heaven may, by our unbelief, our want of faith, be turned into corruption and a curse to us. If we partake unworthily, we change that which was given to strengthen into a means of "damnation." And we are constrained to resort *daily* to God for fresh supply of this bread; for we know to-day's heavenly food will not keep us to-morrow. Fresh and more bread from heaven will be needed for the morrow. Day by day sustained by this eternal food, we shall be strengthened to stand before Jesus at His coming.

JANUARY 8.

"And Moses went up into the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai. And Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights."—EXOD. xxiv. 15, 16, 18.

THE circumstances were truly solemn under which God wrote the law on tables of stone, whether, as on the first occasion, they were written by the finger of God himself, or, as afterwards, by Moses in His presence.

What a solemn and mysterious experience did Moses undergo! What a wonderful preparation for all his after work! Moses alone with God in His glory forty days and nights! O let us ponder into how much more solemn an experience, into how much more wonderful position we have been called. Not indeed taken up into the sensible and visible glory of God, but taken up, as Moses was not, into personal union with the incarnate Son! We are His members, we have His life. We abide in Him, and He abides in us. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Our personal union with Christ is very mysterious, but it is no less very real. O holy mystery! O blessed reality!

And as Moses was taken up that God might write the law on tables, so have we been lifted into our marvellous unity with the Lord that, by the Holy Ghost, His law may be written on our heart, that God may have us as living epistles whom creation may read and know Him as the only Lord God!

JANUARY 9.

"*Thy Holy Child Jesus.*"—ACTS iv. 27.

WE are told that as Joseph and Mary journeyed home, "the child Jesus" tarried behind. He was then twelve years of age; still is He termed the "Child." He ever carries this character about with Him. He bears it to the end. He carries its very name into the heavens. It stands on the record of holy Scripture for ever that He is the "Holy Child." It was because of this peculiar character that He hung upon the lips of the Jewish teachers, and that they, on the other hand, were "astonished at His answers." They had not before met with such a lad. "Here is one," they might say, "that seems to answer the description given by the Psalmist, 'understanding more than all the teachers and the ancients,' but yet He hungers after our exposition of the law." What a comfort must it have been to their hearts to find this Child so honouring them, and witnessing to the reality of their office at a time when that reality was drooping away. Let us meditate this character of submission and of teachableness. The teachers were God's ordinances for expounding the law; and Jesus, recognising them as such, went to them for instruction—He despised them not, He submitted Himself to them. This submission to others did not hide the light which was in Him—it was the occasion of revealing it. Let us honour God's ordinances by submitting ourselves to them in a childlike spirit: then will it be seen how much Jesus is with us.

JANUARY 10.

"*The Lord of Hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.*"—ISA. xxiii. 9.

YESTERDAY we contemplated the character of the "Holy Child Jesus." We have here a very different spirit portrayed — men lifted up with pride, with the glory and honour which come from this world alone. Of these Christ had none. Through His obedience and reverence of heart, He grew in stature, and in wisdom, and in favour. He gained the favour of God and man. Thus only can we maintain the honour of God's name. That which degrades and brings a man into contempt, is the lack of a reverent and obedient spirit. Man exalting himself, and refusing in his spirit to reverence the ordinances of God as his shield and protection, will inevitably lose his just weight and influence. But if he honour them as Jesus did, then will his spirit be kept in a calm submissive tone, which will impart a force and wisdom to all his actions. There can be no just influence in a man's character who does not recognise his own nothingness before God. It is this feeling which leads him ever to put himself under the shelter of those covering wings which God has spread abroad for the protection of His people. The family and the Church, with her ministries and other holy ordinances, are such covering wings as shield a man, and help him to maintain his place before God. To neglect or despise an ordinance of God is to weaken and injure oneself. Every man who fears God knows he has a duty to fulfil *as from God* towards others: and he knows he can only be respected in that duty as he respects others in theirs towards or over him.

JANUARY 11.

"*I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.*"—1 COR. ix. 27.

WHEN the apostle tells us he kept his body in subjection, he doubtless meant his whole being. But there is a peculiar emphasis in his using the term "body;" and it agrees with the illustration he gives of a "race." Elsewhere it is written, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost," "your bodies are members of Christ." Because of this, the apostle kept the body in subjection, lest he should defile the temple of God. Yea, he fought, he struggled against the power his fallen and mortal body put forth in order to hinder the Spirit who abode in him. And the language of his struggle is touching, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body?" Surely we each know in our own experience what a need-be there is to keep this mortal body in subjection; what power it has to quench the Spirit of God; how the motions of sin within it, when suffered to rise, do stay the operations of God within us and by us. But perhaps few have thought sufficiently of this. Perhaps few apprehend the bearing of the body on the spirit, and discern that inattention or carelessness in the use of our bodies has a grievous influence, affecting our spiritual being. It is all the more needful that attention be drawn to it, that we be increasingly stirred up to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."

JANUARY 12.

"*I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, and His statutes, and His judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply; and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.*"—DEUT. xxx. 16.

CIRCUMCISION was the sign of the covenant that God would give the land of Canaan to the seed of Abraham for ever. Two conditions were laid upon them, one being the outward act of circumcision; and the other, the possession of the grace of the *true* circumcision of the heart, (ver. 6) which would move them to keep His law and do His will. On the fulfilment of these conditions depended their inheriting the land. The Jews kept not these conditions, and the inheritance was forfeited. Jesus kept all the conditions laid upon Him, and therefore has He a right to the heavenly inheritance. We are called to be fellow-heirs with Him, and will attain to the inheritance *if we keep the conditions*. It behoves us to look well to the condition of our hearts, as being separated from this present world, ere we can expect to receive the heavenly inheritance. Its great characteristic is, that there the "will of God is done,"—there His will reigns paramount. No one need look for the blessedness there who is not now learning to esteem the will and law of the Lord paramount to all other considerations. He who would inherit the land and dwell therein for ever, must now learn to subdue beneath his feet all lusts, passions, feelings, and self-will. Let us then do the will of God from the heart. Let us exclude all worldly considerations whatever, as nothing compared with the will of the Most High.

JANUARY 13.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—PHIL. iii. 13, 14.

ST PAUL had great privileges as a Jew. But God touched his heart. He counted them but dung. And he was joined unto Christ; he was translated from the bondage of the Jew into the liberty of the Christian. Did this satisfy him? Did he thereby attain unto the end of what God meant by touching his heart? We found him in the Jewish state desiring a better condition; and he now that we find him in the Christian state, behold is not satisfied. He is at peace, but he is pressing forward for something over and above. He counts not himself to have apprehended, or to have already attained, or to be, as yet, perfect. The use he made of his present calling was to apprehend or lay hold of that for which the Lord had apprehended or laid hold of him; even to attain unto the resurrection of (or, rather, from among) the dead; even to attain to the putting off the body of sin, and the putting on the body of life. Now this is the condition of mind in which we must be if we would be ready to meet the Lord at His coming. Abiding in this condition, St Paul bore a constant testimony to the evils of this present state, and that testimony was a constant keeping of his body in subjection, and a renouncing of all confidence in his own resources or strength, ever drawing from the unsearchable riches of Christ, ever trusting in His unfailing power.

JANUARY 14.

"*Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.*"—HEB. x. 7.

DAVID in the fortieth Psalm prophesies respecting Christ. He speaks of the bitter experiences of the Man of Sorrows; but he speaks, too, of His ever ready obedience, of His constant yielding to His Father's will. He tells us of no pride in the promised Redeemer, but of the blessedness of making the Lord his trust; he sees in the coming Saviour no fretfulness in the midst of "innumerable evils," but a "waiting patiently for the Lord." "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." As prophecy declared He would be, so we find He was. The one object of His existence was to do the will of the eternal Father. To that will all thoughts, and words, and deeds were referred, to it were they subordinated. We must, entering into union with Christ, enter also into this purpose. We are to labour together with Him. We are in Him, and used by Him, so that, through the Holy Ghost, we are to be ever constrained to live only for the Father's will. The Son wills to worship the Father, and we must ever fall down and worship God. The Son wills to bear witness of the Father, and we must ever labour to get free from all hindrances that we may bear faithful witness among men. Thus are we brought into fellowship with the will of the Son and of the Father. Thus can we say, "Lo, we come to do Thy will, O God." Daily striving to do His will now, we shall be prepared to do perfectly all His will in the "kingdom of heaven."

JANUARY 15.

"*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*"—ST JOHN i. 18.

CHRIST became incarnate that He might make manifest the eternal God. He brought forth into revelation and light the character of God. God is love, and we are the offspring of love. It is the joy of God to make Himself known in humanity, in His own image, as the God of love, the perfection of excellence. If we would think aright of the work of Christ in our nature, we must lay hold of this very essence of God, and behold not only the birth of our Lord as the doing of love, but every successive development of Christ's life as the declaring of the Father, the revealing of love. Every stream that flows from this great fountain bears forth some of the sweet waters of love. Jesus declares God, reveals His character that it may become ours. Jesus is "the express image," the manifested delineation of God, truly and fully did He represent Him. Every word, every incident in Christ's life was a witness that "God is love." This, too, is the calling of the redeemed, we are to be "express images," we are to be revealers of God. "The manifold wisdom of God" is to be made known "by the Church." In the kingdom soon to be revealed, we shall be faithful witnesses of God, telling out to all creation that He is love. In preparation for this, let us clothe ourselves with love. Only in this way can we be ready to go forth to meet Him. All the means of grace, but especially the holy Communion, God makes use of to convey love to us, and to bring us into that condition of spirit toward each other that will urge us to fulfil the law of love to each other.

JANUARY 16.

He shall not speak of Himself.—St John xvi. 13.

To know God is the highest of all attainments, but the more we know Him, the more clearly is brought to light the utter nothingness of the creature. Every increasing development of the truth of Godhead shows out further excellences in the character of God, He is the more exalted, and the creature more humbled. What a rebuke it is to our pride and self-exaltation when we see God by His example teaching us to be lowly. He is conveying to us lessons of the deepest humility just in proportion as He appears greater. How does Jesus teach us humility! For in His character what feature stands out more beautifully than lowliness? In the sending of the Holy Ghost, what feature stands out so lovely in the Spirit's character as lowliness and humility? How utterly He is apart from all self-exaltation. Hear what Jesus says of Him, "He shall not speak of Himself." The whole bearing of that Divine Spirit, in all his operations, is a retiring and hiding of Himself, in order to the exaltation of the man Jesus Christ. And never is *He* more honoured by us than when we glory in the work of Jesus; and never is *He* more dishonoured and quenched than when we are tempted to look away from Jesus, and dwell on *His* present spiritual operations. O marvellous lesson! O beautiful and touching lesson to our proud hearts! O may God prevail with us that we may no more exalt self, but ever exalt Jesus.

JANUARY 17.

"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end."—ISA. ix. 6, 7.

VERY glorious are the words of prophecy spoken concerning the coming of the Virgin's Son. No doubt men thought they could not mistake them. But He came; He came unnoticed. No eye saw Him but the eye of faith. Mortal eye could not see God veiled under mortal weakness. Whence arose this want of faith on the part of the Jews? They understood not the Scriptures. They misplaced the statements of prophecy. They wanted the crown without the cross. They fixed their eyes on the glory that is to be revealed when Jesus comes to take possession of the kingdom; but they remembered not that He must first lay the foundations of that kingdom in an hour of deep humiliation and suffering. Hence their want of faith,—hence their rejection of the lowly One. Let us beware lest we, like them, deal partially with the revelations made in holy Scriptures. The snare in which we may be taken is, lest, while speaking of the "sufferings of Christ," we forget and are unaffected by "the glory that should follow." And thus may that glory burst upon the Church and find us unprepared to recognise, to welcome, and to enter into it. It was pride that covered the eyes of men with a mist, so that they could not see God in weakness. And it is pride, coming to its height in these last days, which hides from many the signs that the Lord is at hand. The pride of the scoffers says, "Where is the promise of His coming?" God give us a humble, reverent, and teachable spirit.

JANUARY 18.

"*The answer of a good conscience toward God.*"—1 PETER iii. 21.

VERILY "a good conscience toward God" must be a "conscience void of offence," such a conscience as St Paul speaks of when he says, "I thank God whom I serve with a pure conscience." Let us ever pray to God to cleanse our conscience that we may be prepared for the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such a condition is essential to our fitness to meet the Lord. Let us now consider how we can be ready to stand before Him with acceptance at this or any moment. The clean or good conscience comes through the blood of Jesus. The clean or good conscience comes through the obedience of heart, and the running in the way of God's commandments. They who are cleansed through the blood of the Lamb are they who follow after Him in all just works, and yet do put all their confidence for acceptance in the merits of His sacrifice. For the more the will of God is done, the more the heart discovers how far short it is of fulfilling His desire. The more the work of holiness is wrought in the heart, the more do we realise the uncleanness and deceitfulness yet remaining. While, therefore, there is much peace in doing the will of God, there is an increasing casting of the creature on the cleansing of the blood of Christ. In this spirit shall we be found fit and ready for His appearing, and have "the answer of a good conscience toward God."

JANUARY 19.

"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."
—1 PETER ii. 22.

WE meditated lately on the truth that Christ came into humanity as the revealer of the Father, to make manifest to all that "God is love." We now meditate on another purpose in His incarnation, even that He might manifest in our human nature true holiness and purity of life. Man, from Adam onwards, failed to do this. Christ, the Son of man, prevailed to accomplish this design in man's nature. We having become one with Him who first became one with us, must enter into His purpose. We cannot do so save as we are found watchful and zealous to maintain good works, a good spirit, and a pure and heavenly disposition. We are members of Christ that we may in all things be conformed to His image, and be, like Him, holy, just, and true. How can we lay hold of and enter into God's purpose of manifesting holiness and purity in our human nature except we be declaring plainly that our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven, and that we are separating ourselves from the spirit of this world. Every one of us must needs take more and more heed to our walk and conversation. God has brought us into His family, given us His Holy Spirit, and His blessed ordinances of Word and Sacrament, that we may have increasing vigour and strength to overcome the lusts of this flesh and works of this world. Let us cast ourselves at His feet with great solemnity of heart, knowing that "to whom much is given much will be required."

JANUARY 20.

"*Be not wise in your own conceits.*"—ROM. xii. 16.

THIS is an admonition especially worthy of meditation in this age. It is not directed against vanity merely, and against exaltation of one's own wisdom. It is a warning against exclusiveness or individualism either in persons or churches. The gift, or light, or grace that is in any one Christian or any one division of the Church of Christ, is little more than a "conceit" when used as if it comprehended all gift, or light, or grace, or when it is used independently of the help that is in other Christians or churches. To be wise in one's own gift or way unfits such person or church for healthy action in the body of Christ. It makes one satisfied with what is attained, instead of pressing on unto perfection. There is a double evil in the spirit which tempts us to be exclusive—to be wise in our own conceits. It not only keeps back the service we might and ought to render to others, but, in failing to make use of the service that may be in others, we ourselves lack that help which would bring strength and development to our usefulness. No man, and no division of the Church can contain the fulness of Christ. Let us not be puffed up with our partial wisdom—let us open our hearts and minds to acknowledge and receive whatever of good may be in others.

JANUARY 21.

"*Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And Jesus saith unto the centurion, I will come and heal him.*"—MATT. viii. 3, 7.

THE Jews were a privileged nation. God was with them. But they thought their privilege was a personal favour to themselves. They knew not that it was for the purpose of blessing others—for the bringing of all other nations under their blessing. Here, however, a Jew is found, who knew what was the Father's will. Jesus of Nazareth knew the spirit of the law. Behold, this Jew comes down from the Mount of Beatitudes, and whom does He meet? A leper, one cast out from the congregation of Israel, a man marked out to be avoided. Jesus opens upon him the fountain of His love; He puts forth His hand and *touches* him, leper though he be, and He heals him. Then He meets a centurion from Capernaum, a Roman soldier, a Gentile, a man unfit to enter within the holy precincts of the temple. Again this Jew, this faithful keeper of the law, turns not away from the despised Gentile. He converses with him, commends his faith, blesses him, answers his prayer, and heals his servant. We are privileged to ascend into the mount with the Lord—the mount of high devotion, of blessed and saintly communion and fellowship with the exalted Saviour. Oh let us, when we come down, learn that largeness of heart which is ready to grasp all the outcasts. Let us be contented to gather and bless those whose name is not honourable among men.

JANUARY 22.

"*Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*"—MATT. viii. 10.

THERE is in the centurion's character, as narrated in the Gospel, a combination of virtues. We find him compassionate to his servant and to the nation of the Jews; faithful in rule, simple in faith, modest and humble. In this condition he met the Lord, and was prepared for His commendation. We are too apt to look only at certain feelings, or a certain measure of knowledge, as necessary in order that we may receive aright the grace of the Lord Jesus. We are too apt to separate these from a right moral condition. We are in the enjoyment of rich mercies, we have constant communion with the Lord, we have before us the blessed hope of His appearing again to set us at His right hand. All this should lead us to ponder well as to our conduct in our relative positions, and in the discharge of our domestic and social duties. We should ever be examining ourselves in this matter; for if at fault in our family feelings, in our family obedience or rule, or whatever else becometh us in our several places, then are we unfitted thereby to receive the grace of the Lord Jesus. We are not ready to receive Him, that He may work by us and in us those works whereby He would manifest forth His glory. Do we long for His presence, and do we desire to stand before Him when He cometh? Then let us see to it that we come forth as they who are faithful in our homes and in our neighbourhoods.

JANUARY 23.

"*For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole.*"—MARK v. 28.

OUR Lord was on His way to the house of the ruler, to raise his child, when this woman, "which had an issue of blood twelve years," came and touched Him. He was at the time surrounded by a great crowd. They knew not Who it was they were touching, perhaps with great irreverence. His sacred person was not recognised by the motley crowd. But there was one who knew who He was, one who touched Him in consciousness that salvation and healing were in His person. She could get no further than to touch His garment. We know the result; she was healed. Now in this day what crowds flock around the Lord. Holy things,—His Bible, His ordinances of grace, His blessed sacraments, are now much spoken of and used, touched, handled, ay, tossed about in conversation as mere common things, and truly many know not what they touch, nor perceive any virtue to be in them. Oh let us return and lay hold of Christ and His ordinances, believing that virtue is there to heal all our loathsomeness. St Mark tells us that she "had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." This is a striking lesson. Man cannot cleanse us, under man's direction our impurity rather grows worse. We must leave human help and direction; we must return to God's way of healing, and He will cleanse us and prepare us to be with Him when He raiseth the dead.

JANUARY 24.

"*His mother saith unto the servants, whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.*"—JOHN ii. 5.
"*Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering.*"—ROM. xii. 7.

THERE was a ministry which Mary had to fulfil at the marriage feast. It was a bidding the servants to do whatsoever Jesus told them. *They* waited again on *their* ministry, they set the water-pots, they filled them with water. And both they and Mary had their reward. When Jesus, manifesting forth His glory, turned the water into wine, they saw this miracle and the great joy at the feast. Their work, though a dutiful one, was one of little moment in the eye of man, but it prepared the way of the Lord. And is there not room for devout meditation when we connect this truth with the precepts of the apostle unto the Church, that we each wait on our respective ministries? We are *to do* this not merely as an act of bare duty, but in the holy assurance that each service or ministry will not only lead the way to the revealing of the glory of Jesus, but will itself be no longer of little worth, because it will be filled with the wine of His grace and blessing. Mary knew there was One present at the feast "who was more than a prophet," who was God. She had, therefore, *great* encouragement to wait patiently His *hour*. We, too, know that His presence in our midst is a reality, and we are filled with holy joy and confidence as we wait upon our various ministries, knowing they are not in vain in the Lord.

JANUARY 25.

"*Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*"—HEB. xii. 11.

FAMILY and national trials, when looked at in the partial light of the present time, appear very oppressive. When we see, however, that the hand of the Lord is lying heavy upon us, then should our spirits be exercised in godly contrition, accompanied with thankful hearts that we are checked and reined in through these dealings of the Lord towards us. There is in the nature of man an inward course towards the establishment of his own ways and will. God seems often as if He smiled upon that course, as if His providence were all in favour of that scheme or plan which has risen in man's mind. But behold the chastening love of God! Suddenly, unexpectedly, He puts some barrier in the way that blasts the hopes of the creature. A disappointed and heavy heart is the first experience. By and by the spirit, as it is exercised in God's sight, rather sees cause for deep gratitude for the fatherly hindrance, than fear for the consequences that may result from the trial which thus affects our worldly interests. These we leave with confidence in the hand of God. We discern the love and righteousness of God, even when He cometh forth to check our plans and damp our prospects. We sink beneath the hand of God, and, with gratitude, we calculate not on consequences, but *still* trust in Him.

JANUARY 26.

"*And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day.*"—EXOD. xiv. 13.

THE Israelites are hemmed in. Pharaoh is behind them, the Red Sea is before them. What are they to do? They have come out of Egypt very buoyant in heart; they are no more the prisoners of the uncircumcised. But lo! here is a sad trial. Destruction is both before and behind them. No accidental thing has befallen them. The matter is of God. There is a purpose in it. They are on a flight, and God by His providence, and then by His Word, saith, "*Stand still.*" And then He showed them they were nothing, and that their salvation was of Himself alone. We, too, have set out to meet the Lord, and to take possession of the promised land. The Holy Ghost hath been given to us to guide us into the inheritance. But sometimes we are led into a position whence there seems no deliverance. Behind us is the coldness of that spiritual death from which we have been delivered. We cannot go back to that. Before us is a sea of difficulties, yea, such as would overwhelm us. What shall we do? what can we do? Oh! we must so learn our helplessness and nothingness as to cast ourselves upon the outstretched hand of the Lord. We would "stand still." We would cease from all going in our own might. This is an attitude of the most affecting dependence, an attitude of intense uplooking to the God of Israel, and which He will answer gloriously.

JANUARY 27.

"*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves.*"—ROM. xii. 19.

IT is good to meditate to what extent our spirits are clear of vengeance. Are we so exercised in love towards men, that, on all occasions of public or private offence, we are meeting it, not with a negative feeling, but with an active and positive outgoing of love, so as to be always heaping upon the offenders "coals of fire." Observing how much evil, how much withstanding of God's will there is in our brethren, are we really hastening to the place of intercession, that we may cover them with the mercy of the Most High? Or are we merely indifferent onlookers, seized with a hopelessness of every remedy for abounding evil? Are we proving our love to God's enemies and ours by zealously declaring unto them the forgiveness of Jesus, and the glad tidings of His kingdom? Or are we virtually taking vengeance by withholding what we can of this gracious message? This love that returneth good for evil is not unconscious of the exceeding evil of sin; yea, it is conscious that God's righteous indignation resteth on all transgressors. Though it taketh no vengeance itself, yet it is deeply impressed that vengeance belongeth unto the Lord, and must be executed against all who obey not the Gospel. Because of this, is the heart very desirous of declaring His love, desirous now of opening up that love more and more, so that men may turn in time, and not be enveloped in the cloud of wrath and darkness that shall soon cover all.

JANUARY 28.

"*Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.*"—2 COR. viii. 9.

THIS is an oft-repeated, a well-known statement,—a truth which doubtless creates great reverence for the name of Jesus. But who knows the power of that truth? Who takes Him for an example herein? The truth is on record, that we might walk in His footsteps? Let us meditate that liberality of heart which should be manifested by those whom God has made rich in grace and in the knowledge of His purpose. Wherefore made rich? Surely that we may sow bountifully, dispense abroad, and give unto the poor, and abound in every good work. The honour and glory of being enriched of God, is to part with and use those riches for the help of the needy. When exalted in the grace of God, the heart rests not. It beholds two objects; it rejoices, and beholds the Lamb of God, it pities, and beholds the desolations of men. It looks not upon itself at all. Constrained by love, it adores the Lord, laying all riches at His feet. Constrained by love, it follows the character of God himself, and gives itself, with a reckless devotedness, to bring up the beggars from the dunghill, and set them among princes. Besides all this, there is such a desire in an enriched heart to please God. The word, "God loveth a cheerful giver," sounds on the ear, revives the heart, that we may be found doing what He loves.

JANUARY 29.

'*And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.*"—MATT. viii. 25.

ST PAUL says (2 Cor. i. 8, 9) that he was pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that he despaired even of life: for he had the sentence in him, that he should not trust in himself, but in God, which raiseth the dead. We find the disciples in a like condition. The waves were about to swallow them up. They felt their weakness, and they appealed unto the Lord, who slept in peace. These things are full of instruction. The true condition of the creature is that of dependence and trust. We may have the theory of this in our heads, but not until God leaves us to ourselves, casts us into circumstances beyond our own resources, does this truth come to us in power. Then is there a bitter cry. Then do we know what a searching thing it is to have the sentence of death abiding in us. There is often a vaunting, a lightness, a worldly listlessness side by side even with the best knowledge of theology, which unfit a man for that righteous condition of the creature,—lowliness and obedience. God searches this out through overwhelming troubles going over us like waves and billows; and out of the depths we cry. Then do we not merely know in theory, we *taste* the love of God. But we *taste* also a sense of our own vanity, and this not for a passing moment, but always.

JANUARY 30.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."—MATT. iv. 1.

As we worship Jesus, and contemplate Him in His struggle in the wilderness, our hearts are greatly encouraged in the midst of our temptations. As the days of our spiritual struggle increase, our eyes should be fixed on One who, having gone through all we have to endure, is now clothed with honour and glory. If we look upon the difficulties of our path, we are discouraged; if we look upon the Elder Brother who is highly exalted, we are encouraged and strengthened. Let us lay to heart that victory was obtained by the Captain of our Salvation, and with the shout of victory, yea, in possession of the victory, because we are *in* Him who hath conquered, let us not shrink from the struggle. It is our privilege to follow Jesus in His temptations. So far from shrinking or grudging trials and assaults of the enemy, we would receive them as most blessed tests of the condition of our spirit, and as occasions when, laying aside all self-dependence, and trusting in God even as Jesus did, we may resist and overcome the enemy. Again, we would set our hearts upon the glory of God; our hearts' desire would be to attain it, and, as we behold Jesus, Who entered upon the glory after being tempted and tried, we would remember that we cannot follow Him without being also sifted. But we fear not the result. The result shall be a withdrawing from all confidence in self, to rest in the Lord Jesus.

JANUARY 31.

"*The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.*"—ISA. xl. 28.
"*Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*"—GAL. vi. 9.

THE first text declares the character of God; the second speaks to us that we "weary not in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Reap what? Everlasting life. And if we faint, hear what He who is the Everlasting Life says by the prophet,—"He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." And we have the promise, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint." Assuredly, therefore, let us not "weary in well-doing." And what is well-doing? Is it not to "wait upon the Lord?" And how shall we wait upon Him? Where is He, that we may pay our court to Him? Tell me where is He to be found, even He in whom my soul delighteth? He is everywhere, and to be found everywhere. But especially will He be found "giving power to the faint," by those who wait upon Him in the courts of His house, and in the worthy receiving of the Holy Communion. There the faithful meet the Lord, there He meeteth them. There He giveth power to the faint, even eternal life. There they renew their strength, and mount up with wings as eagles.

FEBRUARY 1.

"*The days of her purification according to the law of Moses, were accomplished.*"—LUKE ii. 22.
"*She shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt-offering, and the other for a sin-offering.*"—LEV. xii. 8.

WHEN Mary came up to Jerusalem to present her child unto God, she at the same time sought purification for herself. We cannot acceptably bring any offering to the Lord unless we do so in purity of heart and conscience. There is valuable instruction to us in the manner in which Mary obtained ceremonial purification. Let us gather out the lesson. She brought two young pigeons; one as a burnt-offering, the other as a sin-offering. What do these two sacrifices, appointed for the mother at her purification, typify? The sin-offering was presented as expressive of faith,—that atonement for sin could only be made through the vicarious death and blood of the appointed sacrifice, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. The burnt-offering, to be wholly consumed with fire, was presented as expressive of faith that the creature could only be brought back into complete subjection to God through the death of the old man, derived from the first Adam, the entire destruction of the sinful nature, and the reception of a new life from Christ, the second Adam. In this faith as seen, not in type, but in antitype—not in shadow, but in reality—we daily come for purification. Through the blood of the Holy One we are cleansed, and through the same blood must we seek to crucify the old man, and nourish the new life in Christ Jesus.

FEBRUARY 2.

"*They brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.*"—LUKE ii. 22.
"*Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.*"—ROM. xii. 1.

OUR blessed Lord was presented in the temple as "holy to the Lord." Mary came before God with a perfect offering, though veiled in the weakness of a babe. She came with an offering for whose sake all offerings to God are acceptable. She held in her arms the source of her own blessing, and the blessing of all humanity. She comes up unclean, but she has in her grasp the promised seed, through the sprinkling of whose blood all uncleanness is washed away. She presents, as holy to the Lord, Him through Whom we are able to present ourselves as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God. He was ever true to His calling, His whole life made manifest that He was separated to be "holy unto the Lord." Let us meditate this solemn fact. We are united unto Christ, that there may be on our part a complete dedication of our whole being to God. This First-begotten appeared suddenly in the temple; but Simeon and Anna were ready to receive Him. The First-begotten will appear again when men look not for Him. Only as we are found faithfully presenting ourselves daily as living sacrifices unto God, can we be ready to receive Him and live.

FEBRUARY 3.

"*The parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law.*"—LUKE ii. 27.

IT was as a little child that Jesus was presented in the temple. In the hands of His parents He was carried up there. As a child He first appeared in the public service of the temple. His first act of offering and of worship was as a child. And in this act He bore witness to, prefigured, foretold this blessed truth, that just as He appeared now in the temple as a child, so all His life long He would carry before God and man the childlike spirit. First serving God as a child, He continued to the end as humble and docile in His Father's hand as a little child. He placed Himself under the care and protection of those ordinances in the family or Church which His Father had instituted, just as a little child would cling to its mother in the day of trial. He received all the dealings of His Father's providence without ever doubting a Father's care. He behaved Himself towards all men with the guilelessness of a little child. And *at last*, He Who was *carried up* by His mother's hands to the temple, and dedicated to God, was received up, *carried up* into heaven itself by the Father's power. The "Holy Child Jesus" now waits at the Father's right hand until the day come when He will be manifested in glory to all men. How shall we have part with Him in the glories of that blessed day, except by our ever "becoming as little children?"

FEBRUARY 4.

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"
—LUKE ii. 49.

THE child tarried behind at Jerusalem, and Joseph and Mary sought Him. When they found Him, His mother said, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?" She did not remember at the time the word which had been written of Him—"Lo! I come to do Thy will;" therefore she understood not this action of our Lord when He tarried in the temple. Such a misunderstanding sometimes arises still. Just in proportion as we continually present our bodies as living sacrifices, can the expression, "Lo! I come to do Thy will," be distinctly characteristic of us as devoted followers of the Saviour. And though, for a season, nearest and dearest may not understand those who give themselves wholly to wait upon the Lord, yet the day is coming when they will understand that in all we do, we must be "about our Father's business."

The example of Christ's life is very precious. He was "about His Father's business" in the temple. He was "about His Father's business" in the house of Joseph at Nazareth. Fulfilling in the temple the dutiful reverence of the scholar to those who sat in Moses' seat! Fulfilling in the house of Joseph the dutiful reverence of the child to the parents! Knowing more than the "doctors," yet learning from them! Knowing more of His duty and calling than either Mary or Joseph, yet meekly returning to their house, *subject* to them! Let us be "about our Father's business," by being dutiful in the Church and in the family.

FEBRUARY 5.

"*Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.*"—LUKE ii. 34.

THIS is a strange and searching expression used by Simeon when he took up the child. Even that Babe, helpless as He looked, "was set for the fall and rising again of many." But Simeon only foretold what was afterwards abundantly realised. That child made manifest the mind and way of God, and the reception of what He said and did proved men's hearts to be right with God, and the rejection of Him proved men's hearts to be rejecting God. Many fell because they received Him not as God; many rose up into the dignity of sons, because they had humility of heart to call Jesus "Lord." Many a Jew fell from what he had, and many a Jew rose up from the legality of the Jewish, into the liberty of the Christian standing.

This truth bears upon the Church in these days. God's purposes are hastening to fulfilment. They are revealed in Scripture, and are being accomplished in the hands of "this child." He is by these means proving our spirit, revealing the thoughts of our hearts. And by the reception we give to Him and His purposes, we are showing what manner of spirit we are of. The necessary consequence of coming into contact with that which is of God is a searching of heart, oftentimes most trying, humbling, disappointing. Yet let us not forget that while "this child is set for the fall," He is set also for the "rising again." Herein is depth of consolation.

FEBRUARY 6.

"*Him that overcometh.*"—REV. iii. 12.

EVEN to him are made precious promises. He shall "eat of the tree of life;" he "shall not be hurt of the second death;" he shall "eat of the hidden manna;" he shall "have power over the nations;" he "shall be clothed in white raiment, and be made a pillar in the temple of our God;" he shall "sit with Christ in His throne," and "shall inherit all things." All these are promised to "him that overcometh." Overcometh what and whom? Those enemies whom he is pledged and daily called upon to renounce—the devil, the world, and the flesh. These promises are spoken to those who have a contest with deadly foes. And where lies the scene of this warfare? Where the battle-field? Even where Jesus fought His good fight and overcame—in frail humanity. The promises are addressed to His fellow-heirs, to "the members of His flesh and of His bones," to those whom He has set in their several places, and to whom He has given their distinct offices to fulfil. The victory that is held out to us must be a victory gained in those places to which we have been called of God. And this victory is no mere belief in doctrine, no theory or sentiment, no saying "Lord, Lord," but a constant triumph over our own spirits, a keeping in subjection of our personal wills. It is a crucifying of the sinful nature, so that no evil passion may obtain a mastery over us. Let us, therefore, be on our guard; let us lay to heart our calling and our work. Let us fight the good fight of faith.

FEBRUARY 7.

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."—EPHES. vi. 12.

THE act of wrestling brings out emphatically the calling of Christians in their work. We have a double wrestling. We wrestle *against* our enemies: We wrestle *with* our Lord. The conflict *against* spiritual wickedness is a close conflict, just as wrestling man to man is exceeding close. Our intercession *with* the Lord is a close and earnest work, just as it is when man wrestles with man. In this twofold work we obtain success by being filled with the same spirit as was found in our great Example. Jesus is the alone Righteous One found in the earth for whose sake God will rescue all things from the power of the adversary. Jesus is the one devoted Son of all the sons of men who has prevailed with God to obtain blessings for His people, and through them for all creation. He is the Prince of God who has prevailed. He is the wrestler with God who has obtained the victory and the inheritance for men. In Him, and with Him, and through Him, we shall prevail *against* all our foes. In Him, and with Him, and through Him we shall prevail *with* God. And thus having "fought a good fight, finished our course, and kept the faith," we shall receive "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give at the day" when He cometh forth as the glorious conqueror over all *His* enemies.

FEBRUARY 8.

"And Joseph said, Behold I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. . . . And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying."—GEN. xxxvii. 9, 11.

JOSEPH received intimation of the mind of God. He was about to be raised up to a place of great prominence. It is said his father observed the saying, but his brethren envied him. Doubtless Joseph himself had his own feelings of self-importance; his youthful heart was buoyant; his imagination and ambition were at work. As yet he did not know that, in order to be made a fit instrument in God's hand for doing His work, he would require a long and sifting series of trials to reveal to him the emptiness and vanity of the creature. But future events proved that this formed part of God's plans. Consider how great is the promise resting on the Church, which is to be completely fulfilled in the kingdom of glory. The work assigned to her in the purpose of God is unspeakable. But, as in the case of Joseph, there is a preparatory work, a work of cleansing. We are to be purified, trained, and disciplined now, that we may hereafter render perfect and holy service unto God. That which now hinders our doing the work of God is the power, the wisdom, the vanity of the flesh. Let us be contented and patient under every trial, for in this way doth God cleanse us, removing out of the way that which interferes with our efficiency for His service.

FEBRUARY 9.

"*I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.*"—Ps. cxxxii. 4, 5.

LET us enter into this resolute determination of the man of God. Our calling is to watch with vigilance, and be diligent in the Master's service. But spiritual slumber, a sleeping in sin, is one of the besetting dangers of the time. While the Bridegroom tarries, the unfaithful Church slumbers and sleeps. But, beloved, "now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." "Let our loins be girded about, and our lights burning, and ourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." Spiritual slumber is the opposite of this readiness and preparedness for the Lord's coming, it is not in this state that we can "find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." When one is asleep naturally, he is in a ready state for the designs of the malicious. So when asleep spiritually, the enemy finds us the ready prey of his wicked devices. Our prayer and desire should be, to be roused out of sleep and preserved from the subtlety of sin, and made diligent in God's daily service.

FEBRUARY 10.

"*Let each esteem other better than themselves.*"—PHIL. ii. 3.

HOW often do we find the wisdom of God directed against self-exaltation! It is the most trying of all lessons for a man to stand in the consciousness of, and respect for, the position in which God has placed him in the Church, and yet to bear himself as one who is less than nothing. Each man's temptation is to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. To think more of his own usefulness than of the usefulness of others. In this way men become lovers of their own selves, and are not glad of any gift they possess, simply because it is given for the blessing of others. Let us obtain the mastery in this respect, and ever be temperate and humble in our various places. Let us have regard to St Peter's admonition, "All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility," remembering that gifts are imparted to us just in order that we may be ministering servants to our brethren; remembering, too, that we cannot maintain even our own gift or place except we be ministered to and helped by all. Oh for that grace and devotedness of heart that will labour in God's work without regard to self, that will lay our being at God's feet, that we may be ever ready for His service! Oh for a heart that will readily behold all others used and honoured more even than we! Oh for a heart that will lead us to exalt others even above ourselves, that God may be more abundantly glorified in them and us!

FEBRUARY 11.

"*And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses.*"—EXOD. xv. 23, 24.

THE children of Israel come to the wilderness and no water is found for three days. They are brought to Marah and water is there; but it is bitter. Behold how they murmur! Their former deliverances are forgotten. Their hearts are poured out, and they murmur against Moses. We may well imagine what a spectacle rose up before Moses, on that occasion, of all he was destined to encounter in his further leadership. But in this way God was proving Moses, and proving the children of Israel, that the spirit that was in them might be manifested. Let us meditate this. We forget the goodness and mercy of the Lord when trials and disappointments ensue. These do come and must come abundantly in the course of our pilgrimage, that it might be known what is in our hearts. We are to be kept in constant remembrance that all that God has wrought for us in days past is pointing forward to our *complete* deliverance at the coming of the Lord. The spirit, then, with which we should receive the divers vexations that happen is that of thankfulness, gratitude, humility; as things needful to cleanse our hearts, and prevent us resting in that to which we have already attained. Let us not murmur. Let us rather give thanks for all things. Let us watch, when trials arise, that we be found receiving them for blessings.

FEBRUARY 12.

"*And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.*"—EXOD. xvi. 2.

AGAIN we have the children murmuring. Let us not murmur as they also murmured. We are in the wilderness now, we are in the way to the heavenly inheritance, and God is proving us. No help was found for the children of Israel, except what came direct from God. In Egypt they could help themselves according to their lusts and desires. In the desert they could find nothing. They were brought into circumstances of direct dependence upon God. The human heart shrinks from that, and therefore murmurs. Pride rises, and pride is ever rebellious. So long as men can call things their own, and obtain them by the strength of their own hands, they are satisfied. But when emptied of all human resources, and all human help, then is made manifest whether the man is subject unto God, or merely subject to his own selfish will. Now God is dealing with us as He did with the children of Israel. We declare that He has delivered us from worse than Egyptian bondage, and that we have gone forth to meet the Lord. That He may make us meet for this, how should we be constrained to wait only upon His way and pleasure. If we see not God's way and pleasure, we should nevertheless trust in Him. There should be no murmuring, neither any setting up of our own way and pleasure. Rather let us give ourselves to patient prayer, that we may, feeling our very weakness, submit in all things unto His holy will.

FEBRUARY 13.

"Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"—2 COR. xi. 29.

ARE these words, uttered by the apostle, merely descriptive of an apostolic function? Is there not contained in them a principle which is characteristic of the private Christian as well as of the apostle? Yea, it is essential that we exercise a humiliation and self-abasement like Christ's, as the due preparation for our entering into the glory of Christ's kingdom. Let us meditate this. The Lord Jesus is preparing His people to share the glory which He has at the Father's right hand, and part of their preparatory cleansing and purifying is a readiness to take up with, and bear the burdens of all with whom we are now united in the holy covenant, wherewith God binds all His children to Himself and to one another. This is not merely a desire to sympathise with others, but a deep-rooted consciousness that the weakness and sorrows of all are our own. That just as in nature we hasten to our own help and are interested in our own burdens, so, in spirit, we of necessity run to the help and undertake in our hearts to endure the sufferings of the brethren. Walking with God, being of one mind with Him, how can it be otherwise? His love, His character, as seen in His Son, was a laying down of life for man. The needle draws not more naturally to the loadstone than the heart in unity with the Lord will draw to the cares of man, and abide by them until they be delivered.

FEBRUARY 14.

"*And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years.*"—GEN. xv. 13.

WHAT a contrast between the announcement to Abraham, when God called him out of his country, that He would make of him and of his seed a great nation; and the announcement He now makes, when Abraham complained of being childless—that he would have a seed, but that they should go and suffer bonds in Egypt. Let us meditate this contrast; for God deals in like manner with all whom He calls to bear witness for Him. When He calls a man to the honour of serving Him, He speaks of the glory which shall be the end of a faithful labouring together with Him. He dwells on His ultimate purpose of blessing. He overleaps, as it were, the intervening time of suffering. Speaking as the Alpha, He also speaks as the Omega. He knows that, as the heart of a man lays hold of His promise, he will work it out, and experience all those searchings, trials, and disappointments which are needful to the emptying and humbling of the chosen vessels, *in order* that the original purpose may be fulfilled. No man can fully enter into God's work without enduring great heaviness of heart, without the most painful discoveries of what is in himself and all men. And the more fully we enter into fellowship with the Lord, the more fully also do we become acquainted with the fellowship of His suffering. But "let us not be weary in well-doing: in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

FEBRUARY 15.

"*And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.*"—GEN. xxxii. 25.

JACOB wrestles with the angel. He obtains the blessing. But his flesh shrinks, his bodily strength is weakened and brought down. His spirit grows more mighty, and he prevails with God. But his success is marked also by the agony and breaking down of his fleshly nature. Here is something very instructive to us. As we pray and labour in fellowship with God, we must be made to feel how inadequate the flesh is to accomplish God's will, yea, how it must be consumed, and its feelings completely subdued and crucified, if we would attain the victory. We must learn that God gives us success when our trust is in Him, and not in mere human strength or human wisdom. This is truly a painful lesson to us. As we pray unto God, "Thy kingdom come," and as we put ourselves in His hands, that He may work in us and by us in bringing about an answer to this prayer, we must enter into the needs, the trials, the temptations, the hopes and failings of the brethren. Oh, but as we do this we shall be brought into sorrow and suffering; our faith will be tried, our sympathies will be proved, our tempers will be assailed, our charity will be tested, so that we shall find it impossible to endure patiently the work of bearing with and helping others, save as we cease to walk in the flesh, and walk only in the Spirit. To do the Lord's work will ever prove a withering of the flesh, but a nourisher of the Spirit.

FEBRUARY 16.

"*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*"—REV. xxii. 11.

LET us meditate this day the solemn testimony regarding the cutting off from the city of God all who offend and make a lie. God has now visited us in His grace and love. He has called His children to be cut off, separated from all evil. Yea, He has given us the Holy Ghost, that by His operations within us the sting that is in sin may be taken away, and we may be well able to endure against it, and cast it out now, lest it should cast us out at the revelation of the New Jerusalem. Men deceive themselves by waiting for a power to overcome evil, instead of putting forth that which is already with them. To wait thus is, in other words, to love the evil; for if we hated it with a perfect hatred, then would we feel indeed that we had grace to conquer it. God deals with us as they who are set upon a vantage ground; as they who can say, having it in very power to be holy, "I will be holy." Accordingly, when God judges our righteous struggle, He will but set His Amen, His eternal fiat, to our own decision, and declare, "Let him be holy still." But if there is a yielding to the love, and wiles, and seductions of sin, then will the Lord declare His acquiescence (as it were) in our decision in these awful words, "Let him be filthy still." Not that He desires it to be so, but because man desires it so himself.

FEBRUARY 17.

"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more."—GEN. xxxvii. 5.

GOD gave intimation to Joseph of His purpose with him in a very striking manner; and yet the reception, the treatment he met with, the circumstances into which he fell, were the very reverse, in appearance, to those of a man raised up of God. Joseph's history, until he became second in the kingdom, was all alike,—a series of apparent contradictions to the purpose of God with him. In the Book of Psalms, (cv. 18,) we are told God sent him into Egypt as a deliverer, and that his feet were bound in fetters and irons. Extraordinary position for a deliverer! How very opposite to the eye of sense! And yet the eye of faith can readily discern God's way in such bonds and hindrances. It can see Him staining the glory of all human power; it can see Him humbling the instrument, and emptying him of all fleshly confidence. The hopes, the calling, the privileges of God's children, are still higher than Joseph's; yet how often are they troubled and hindered, misunderstood and resisted. They are made to feel that, of themselves, they are helpless before God's enemies, and are unable to follow out what they know to be God's purpose. But God's purposes are not overthrown through the opposition of the wicked or the weakness of His instruments. He is but cleansing and humbling those by whom He will work out His great designs, that they and all men may feel that it is He who worketh salvation. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory."

FEBRUARY 18.

"*And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place.*"—EXOD. xiii. 3.

THE departure out of Egypt was a deliverance, but it brought the children of Israel into great trials. Though escaped the bondage of Pharaoh, yet they were about to be proved whether they were not in a greater bondage still—the bondage of the rebellious flesh. God's deliverance out of Egypt brought them nigh unto Himself; and the nearer they were brought, the more was discovered what was in their hearts. They were humbled in Egypt—perhaps they were still more humbled in the wilderness There they heard the law, there they heard the pattern of the Tabernacle, there they were fed with manna. Each of these events searched and probed their spirits, revealing that they were but little prepared to draw near to God. Is there not very salutary instruction here? Most desirous have we been to be delivered from bondage; and we have set out that we may be free. We have not attained to full freedom yet, for we have not come to the land of inheritance; and as we are led on to the fulfilment of this our hope, we may expect revelations and openings up of God's ways most opposed to the selfish will, to the creature hopes; and these do test our hearts to show whether, indeed, in forsaking bondage, we are ready to fall in with the ways of God. Therefore, as God proceeds to manifest His ways and our utter emptiness, there must be many trials and searchings of heart.

FEBRUARY 19.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."—2 PETER i. 19.

DARKNESS, gross darkness surrounds us. The place in which we move is a dark place; not dark in respect of natural light, but dark in respect of spiritual light; not dark for the movements of the natural man, but dark, utterly dark for the movements of the regenerated man. Naturally, we can walk without a lamp or light; but spiritually, we cannot stir one step "without a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path." To be all this to us, Christ Jesus, the True Light, came into the world and shined amid the darkness. But He has gone from us for a season, and retired within the veil, leaving His Church struggling in the dark night. He has not, however, left us helpless; He hath given us "the more sure word of prophecy," like "a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn." This is given to guide us in the period of darkness, and to point forward to the full sunshine. Thus it begets an intense desire for the dawning of the day, yea, for the coming again of the Light Himself. We are under the guidance of "the more sure word" now, but we are animated by the hope that He will come ere long to chase away the darkness, and shine into the world Himself.

FEBRUARY 20.

"*Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*"—1 COR. xiii. 3.
"*Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death.*"—MATT. xx. 18.

THE life of the Lord Jesus is the best illustration of charity. St Paul tells us that "charity endureth all things;" we see Jesus setting His face steadfastly to endure to the end. St Paul tells us that "charity believeth all things;" we see Jesus going to Jerusalem, that the things written of Him might be fulfilled. What a contrast there is in this to the spirit of the disciples, who as yet believed not all things that are written. Again, St Paul tells us that "charity suffereth long, and is kind, and beareth all things;" behold Jesus hearing the cry of the blind man, and opening his eyes. What a contrast to the spirit of those who followed Him, and rebuked the blind man, and refused all sympathy with his sorrow. Now, it is good for us to meditate these things, that we may grow up into, and be conformed to the spirit of charity. Where charity fills the heart, it will and must be active. Are we not tempted to dream away the time with the theory of charity, while but little action is put forth? Is not charity that deep and burning love which cannot contain itself, but must *find* objects on which to show forth its healing and kindly power? Let us, after Christ's example, be clothed with charity.

FEBRUARY 21.

"*They murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.*"—MATT. xx. 11, 12.

WE find the labourer who had borne the burden and heat of the day, in complaint. His pride was offended, his selfishness was probed; it was found out what was in his heart. The ambition of the fleshly mind was not crucified. No doubt it was an honour to have borne his burden so long. As nothing appears to the contrary, we presume he had done his duty well. But he needed the trial which befell him to show what was in his spirit, and that he had yet to learn that essential character of a servant—humility and lowliness. He required to learn that, having done all, he was unprofitable; that any reward must be of grace, and not of works. Again, it appears he was unacquainted with that spirit which preferred others before himself; that though he laboured abundantly, yet it was needful he should be taught that others must enter into his labours. This is needful, not only for the finishing of the Master's work, but that others may have a share in the honour thereof, and that it may be shown even to the chief labourer, that his labour could only be blessed as it was followed up by other labourers. Let us meditate on those things. Let us cultivate that unity of spirit with all the brethren which will lead us in honour to prefer one another. This is true Christian rivalry.

FEBRUARY 22.

"*And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.*"—LUKE XVIII. 39.

THE rebuking of the blind man by the multitude is worthy of consideration. It is written of this man that "he sat by the wayside begging." What an idea of meanness, and degradation, and pitifulness this expression conveys. Yet his cry entered into the ears of the Lord, and that heart, which bore the burdens of earth's outcast and miserable ones, flowed forth with compassion. He opened the eyes of the blind. Let us stir up the heart of charity, and let us raise, too, the strong cry for mercy. Let us not, on the one hand, be put back by the cold contempt of multitudes, in the Christian Church, who despise the cry for the coming of the Deliverer of this earth from all its distresses and afflictions. Let us not, on the other hand, look with contempt on the poor and needy of God's children. Our hearts must burn with zeal and charity towards all, even though now they may appear as useless to God's glory as was the blind man to the well-being and honour of society. That charity, deep-rooted, seated in the hearts of them who are indwelt of God, must expand itself in faith and hope over many who are now as blind to God's way and purpose of love, as was ever this man to the sun. But their cry (oh! how often nothing but an unconscious groan) for deliverance is as intense, and should touch our hearts, even as the cry of the blind man touched the heart of Jesus.

FEBRUARY 23.

"*He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.*"—LUKE ii. 51.

WHEN Jesus heard and asked questions of the Jewish doctors, He was waiting, not on man, but on God. God answered Him. The instruction was wholesome. After receiving it, He went down to Nazareth, and was subject to His parents. The spirit of obedience and respect for those set over Him was more and more wrought out in the child. He went down, not as one wiser than they, but as one who was prepared to look up to them as fitted of the Father to train and guide Him. Herein lies the great test of instruction being sound or otherwise. If sound, the result of it will be an increased reverence towards the family ordinances. If not sound, the result will be a breaking loose from the regard which should be paid to parents. Increase of knowledge, when received in the spirit of Christ, will not puff up. It is very needful to ponder this subject well in these days. Men are carried away with the cry for education, mental training, intellectual development, as if these were everything. Never before were the young so largely instructed, and yet it is notorious that disobedience to parents, self-will, and irreverence fearfully prevail. Let us, looking at the case of our Lord, be warned that instruction is good only as it leads to obedience.

FEBRUARY 24.

"Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly."—1 COR. xiii. 4, 5.

CHARITY is the reflection of the heart of Jesus. It is the express image of His spirit and character. It is the possession of that mind of God which, while it conveys a true knowledge of Him, conveys also a just estimate of the creature condition, and of our relative positions towards the other members of Christ's body. Therefore, where charity dwells, there must be such a heart that cannot be puffed up with itself, for the presence of God brings along with it such a consciousness of the creature nothingness. Nor can charity vaunt itself, seeing it has nought to boast of; for not only is the vanity of all creature worth and strength impressed upon the mind, but also the dependence we have upon all the members of the body of Christ. We cannot live or grow apart from the brethren. Indeed, the heart that abideth in charity has nothing to boast of; for while it showeth forth the excellence that is in it, it does so in the full knowledge that such excellence has come from above. And there is, moreover, in the bosom where charity dwells, such a heavenly frame and disposition, that there is a corresponding beauty of outward behaviour. Thus, charity "doth not behave itself unseemly." It is the possession of charity that restrains man from all improprieties of manner, or conduct, or word. Our love to God is such that Him we would not grieve; our love to man is such that them we would not cause to stumble.

FEBRUARY 25.

"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."—GEN. iii. 6.

GOD placed our first parents in the garden of Eden, and there He tried and proved them. It was to be seen whether they would look to Him and Him alone as the source of everything that is good, and so lean upon Him as to show that they trusted in His love. But Satan, who had himself refused to be dependent upon God, came to them with a subtle temptation. He suggested to them hard thoughts of God. "How can God," he seems to say to them, "be full of love, when He keeps back from you the fruit of the tree of knowledge? He does not want you to get it, because you would then be like Himself, ye would 'be as gods, knowing good and evil.'" Then our first parents fell from their dependence upon God and His love, and stretched forth the hand and *took* the fruit. Ah! herein was the sin. God, in His own time, might have given them the fruit of the tree, and then they would have had knowledge of all good, but not as now, mingled with the knowledge of evil. But they would not wait that it might be *given* to them by God, they *took* the fruit. And this is ever our temptation; to fall away from trusting in God. We grow impatient, faithless. We rush forward, we wait not the development of God's purposes in His own time and way. We would snatch for ourselves what, for a season, He withholds; we would put forth the hand and *take*. Jesus, the second Adam, continually waited upon God's will, and therefore God hath given unto Him all things. Oh that we may have more of His trustful and patient spirit!

FEBRUARY 26.

"*And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever. . . . So He drove out the man.*"—GEN. iii. 22, 24.

THIS was not in punishment merely. In the midst of judgment God remembered mercy, and therefore "He drove out the man, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever." Man had put forth his hand and taken of the tree of knowledge, and thus had brought himself into a condition of utter ruin and misery. God purposed, however, to raise him out of that condition, so that in it he might not live for ever. In carrying out this purpose, it was needful that, as long as man was in a fallen state, he should be debarred from all access to "the tree of life," lest, eating of its fruit, he should be fixed, *sealed* in that ruined state for ever, beyond all hope of recovery. For it seems to be the result of eating of this tree of life, *of which no man hath yet partaken*, that it confirms us in the condition in which we are at the time. Therefore we say, God in mercy drove out the man, lest he put forth his hand and *take* of the tree of life. God will yet *give* it to man in his restored state, that he may be established in that state for ever, beyond the possibility of again falling away. Hence in Revelation xxii. 14, we read, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to *the tree of life*." Let us ever surrender ourselves into the hands of God, that He may work His holy pleasure in us and by us, so that we may be prepared to enter "the Holy City" and partake of the "Tree of Life."

FEBRUARY 27.

"The devil showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me."—MATT. iv. 8, 9.

"THE kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." He is the Heir of all things. Even in the wilderness, when desolate and forsaken, He was neither ignorant of, nor indifferent to this truth. He longed to enter upon the inheritance of all the kingdoms that they might be for ever reigned over by Him. Lo! Satan tempts Him, offering to Him *at once* all the kingdoms. Eve had listened to his temptation, and seized upon the tree of knowledge before the time when God would give it, and he thought that this Son of Eve might do the same. But nay. The kingdoms indeed were to be His; but He knew He could not present them to the Father in purity until He had redeemed them by His obedience and blood. Therefore He rejected the temptation, He would not put forth His hand and take them before the time when God would bestow them. We are fellow-heirs with Christ. There is an inheritance in reserve for us; and Satan tempts us to substitute the things of this world and their false glory for this inheritance. Oh! he would have us content ourselves with the interests and fascinations of the things that are seen. Here he would have us to find our kingdom, of which we may *take* possession *now*, and not wait for that which is to be given at the coming of the Lord. O God, strengthen us ever to say, "Get thee hence, Satan."

FEBRUARY 28.

"*The devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.*"—MATT. iv. 11.

WHAT a contrast is here presented! What a change in the companionship! The pure and holy Jesus had been exposed forty days to the polluting presence of the devil, and the malicious plots of the great adversary of man. He refuses all fellowship with him. He steadfastly turns away from all his suggestions. He admits him to no parley; He resists him out and out. Satan finds nothing in Him, and cannot rest. For such is the character of the Evil One that he is restless, and runs to and fro to find those who will receive him. Then did angels come and minister to the Lord. Then did those spirits who belong to that glory from whence Jesus came, come and comfort Him. Well worthy of comfort is He who has refused all fellowship with the fallen angel. There is poured into His ear and into His heart the heavenly consolation. Behold, what comfort does this fact bring to us in our hour of temptation! Satan besets us; but we must not listen to nor parley with him. No good thing, no good suggestion, no true light can come from him. And if we resist him, not only is it God's promise, but it is the very nature of the evil one, that he cannot rest beside those who are resting only in God. And when he leaves us, what peace and joy, what divine breathings of love, will be instilled into us, who have preferred the will of God to the will of the devil!

FEBRUARY 29.

"The devil setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down."—MATT. iv. 5, 6.

THE Lord was set upon the pinnacle of the temple. He was bidden by Satan to cast Himself down. As the Son of God, the tempter suggested, He would be preserved by angels from hurting Himself. Thus does the devil work still among the sons of God. Though Jesus knew He was the Son of God, yet He rested not on that as justifying any presumptuous act. Though advanced of God, though highly exalted in God's purpose, yet He could claim no exemption from that first of all duties of the creature—submission to the Father's will. He came into the world as very man, to live in it as one subject in all things to the will of His God; He came to exercise and live a life of faith, and through that to receive the daily sustenance and strength necessary for a creature's life. Let us meditate this. Though highly honoured in our sonship, being the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, though we have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, yet God setteth us in places of trial where we are called upon to exercise faith, to cultivate the spirit of dependence upon God. We have need to watch more and more that we may be found walking in lowliness and humbleness of mind; else we cannot expect the protection of God. We must abide in the assured conviction, that though we are in Christ Jesus, yet our present position calls upon us to walk before God with great modesty, if we would enjoy His deliverance.

MARCH 1.

"*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*"—ROM. xii. 21.

HOW grand is the place which God has given to us, to be His witnesses, to do as He does, "to overcome evil with good." Jesus did overcome evil with good. In the night in which *we betrayed Him*, how He overcame evil with good in bestowing His body and blood as our eternal life! In the morning, when *we cried*, "*Away with Him, crucify Him*," He was led like the lamb to the slaughter, and meekly died for our sins upon the tree! What glorious results have flowed from these His doings, and shall yet flow! Now has He left us an example that we should go and do likewise. Our calling is to overcome all the evil by which we are surrounded, by means of the good which flows from our Risen Head. He pours His fulness into His people, that His grace may stream forth from them as channels of blessing upon all for whom He died. When the Lord shall appear again, it will still be for the overcoming of evil, for the gaining of a victory. His Church will share in His triumph, for she must be with Him. It will then be the final triumph of good over evil.

MARCH 2.

"He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."—MATT. x. 38.

JESUS said, "He that taketh not his cross, and *followeth after Me*, is not worthy of Me." When John saw a vision on Mount Zion of the Lamb, and a company with Him, he said (Rev. xiv. 4), "These are they which *follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.*" In all ages Jesus has had a people who have taken up His cross in order to follow the Saviour's will. In this age He must have a people to be worthy of Him. The cross, not the crown, is laid upon us whilst we are on earth as strangers and pilgrims. The crown is "laid up for us," and will be given to the faithful "at that day." Taking the cross, we are to follow Christ. We are to carry it in humility, in patience, in resignation, in faith, as He did. We are to follow Him *whithersoever He goeth.* Let us beware of wandering into paths He never trod. He seeketh now a people to *follow Him whithersoever he goeth*, and those who faithfully act up to this their calling, shall be led by Him, and be of the company who shall stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Prepare us, O Jesus, to suffer with Thee, that we may also reign with Thee!

MARCH 3.

"*I am the Good Shepherd.*"—JOHN x. 14.

THE spirit of an hireling forsaketh the sheep in their time of need, but the spirit of the Good Shepherd *never* leaveth the sheep. Whether they be in the trials of this life, or in the bondage of the grave, the Good Shepherd fleeth not from the sheep. He is with us in all the multiplied difficulties and sorrows through which we pass. His eye is upon His departed ones, and He covereth their dust under the protection of His care, waiting the moment of His and their glory, when He shall bring them from the grave in triumph. The wolf has made havoc among the sheep of the fold of Christ, and death and the grave have desolated the flock; but ever at the right hand of God has been the Good Shepherd remembering the sheep. And He appointeth shepherds under Him to watch over and care for His sheep. Through them, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, is the presence of Jesus, as the Chief Shepherd, now made known to us. In the watchfulness and care of the shepherds for the supply of the wants and the fulfilment of the desires of all Christ's flock, we see the watchfulness and care of the Good Shepherd.

MARCH 4.

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."—MATT. xv. 28.

WE bless God for the instructive record of the Saviour's dealings with the woman of Canaan. We delight to accompany Him in faith, and look on at that wondrous interview; for in it not only do we rejoice in His love, but we see the expression and picture of His bearing towards ourselves. And as we contemplate the triumph of this woman's persevering intercession, oh how are we encouraged to continue beside Him, even when He humbles us in His presence.

Blessed Jesus, we see in Thee a heart overflowing with desire to help us! and therefore we will not cease to plead! When Christ, as our Substitute, descended deeper and deeper into His agony and sacrifice on our behalf, we read of His long, His earnest, His repeated prayers to His Father. The waves and billows which rolled around Him loosened not His hold upon the everlasting arm. Let us be encouraged to frequent prayer by the example of the woman of Canaan,—above all, by the example of Christ,—and we shall be abundantly answered!

MARCH 5.

"And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."—NUMB. x. 35, 36.

ALL things are in God's hands, and all things serve Him, and the progress of His working is as He pleaseth. Does He move forward? It is to scatter the power of His enemies. Does He seem to tarry and to keep His people waiting? It is to bless them, purify them, assure them of His presence as their portion and blessedness. As we in faithfulness and humility follow the guidance of the Lord, our experience will be, more and more, that we must look to Him alone as all our enjoyment. If active and interesting work is given us by Him to do, the spirit of true followers will cause that this work be done in Him, with Him, for Him. Our eye must not be withdrawn from Him, that it may exclusively regard His working. And when God seems as one who useth us not for His active service, our souls must serve Him in patient waiting, and through the operation of His Spirit, we must become more cognisant of Himself, and of the blessing He is all the while sending upon the thousands of Israel.

MARCH 6.

"The people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?"—EXOD. xvii. 2.

LET us contemplate the dealing of the Lord towards the children of Israel when they murmured for want of water. God brought them into the desert on their way to Canaan. Of necessity water must be scarce. They had not thought of this. In their journey God proved them, that it might be seen whether their joy and confidence were in the God of Abraham, Who promised the land; and Whose power and presence were in the wilderness to help them, as well as in the land of Canaan. But they tempted God. Moses said, as they murmured, "Why tempt ye the Lord?" The spirit of Moses was sore broken, and he appeals to God. Behold the answer. "Go on before the people." "I will stand before thee on the rock in Horeb—water shall come out of it, that the people may drink." What manner of love is here! So does God deal with us now. We are sore tried and tempted with the desolations of this wilderness-condition, and we murmur because of the great lack of life, and power, and present testimony that "God is among us." Yet Jesus is still opening up fresh channels of life to cheer His weary heritage with water. He renders not evil for our evil, but contrariwise blessing. Just as when all men murmured against Him, and said, "Crucify Him," His side was opened, and forth came life for all.

MARCH 7.

"*Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.*"—MATT. iv. 10.

IN the wilderness the devil sought to tempt our Lord by bringing before Him all the glory of the world. The world with all its glory rightly belonged to Jesus. But then it was laid hold of and kept in possession by the usurper. Therefore could Jesus not then enjoy it without thereby giving homage to the usurper. Hence His whole life was one of self-denial and self-sacrifice. We who are members of Christ's Body are subjected to a like temptation. All things in the world are ours, for we are Christ's. But then the grasp of the usurper is upon that which is our rightful property, and we have to be watchful lest we become ensnared by the world in its present condition. For to take our fill of its enjoyments is to do homage to its usurper. Our life then is also to be one of self-denial and self-sacrifice. But we look forward with longing and joyful anticipation to the coming of Jesus to complete His work of crushing the devil, and casting him forth from the redeemed creation. Then shall the saints reign over the earth, and all shall minister to the desires of those who are "heirs and joint-heirs with Christ."

MARCH 8.

"*But He answered and said, It is written.*"—MATT. iv. 4.

OUR Lord in the wilderness is an example unto us in the hour of temptation. He was full of all that was good. He was full of acute reasoning and intelligence. Yea, He was full of the Holy Ghost. There is plenty then *within* Him to resist the devil. Does He use such armour? No. This tempted man never once, in the multitude of His gifts, used one of them as His defence. Had He done so, then would it have been the creature depending upon some inwrought work in the creature. True, there was a deep work in His heart, but it led Him to renounce all confidence in Himself, and constrained Him to bow before the Word of God. "It is written." That is enough; there is no occasion for the creature entering into any argument. "It is written." The creature has nothing to do but subject himself to this. And herein was true humility; true consciousness of the nothingness of man. Let us accustom ourselves to lay aside all self-confidence—even all confidence in past *inward* operations of the Spirit of God, as a present armour of defence. Let us hang implicitly upon the Lord and the Word He hath spoken. "It is written." It becomes us to bend our will entirely before the declared mind of the Son of Man. He who is thus humble will escape. He who is wise in his own spiritual conceit will be overthrown.

MARCH 9.

"Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them."—MATT. xvii. 1, 2.

WHEN our Lord was transfigured, the disciples were permitted to see, for a moment, the glory in which Christ now dwells, and in which He shall appear at His coming. Moses was there—a type of those who, having died in Christ, shall be raised in glory at the first resurrection. Elias was there—a type of those who, being alive at the appearing of the Lord, shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; even as "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." (2 Kings ii. 11.) Yet how emphatic the fact, that when the eyes of the disciples were lifted up they saw Jesus alone. No object but Jesus! Elias and Moses were gone. And then came the Father's voice, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased, *hear ye Him.*" These events shadow forth what is yet to come to pass. We apprehend, by faith, the glory of all the saints about to be revealed. Yet, as we lift up the eye of faith, we see Jesus only—we see all others as they are in Him. On Him the heart is fixed! For Him the soul is athirst! For His words the ear is opened! With Him the faithful are satisfied, waiting for that day when He shall be seen of all in His glory!

MARCH 10.

"*Quench not the Spirit.*"—1 THESS. v. 19.

TERRIBLE indeed have been the consequences of quenching the Spirit. We cannot be guilty of this sin with impunity. The quenching of the Spirit is not a mere negative evil—it is not an evil that stands by itself, unaccompanied with other results. As the Spirit of the Lord is resisted, another spirit is ready to take His place. As the Heavenly Dove is driven away, an unclean spirit—a fowl of the air—is ready to alight upon those for whom Christ died. The spirit of the bottomless pit comes up as the Holy Ghost is put down. Hence the necessity for a very fervent and earnest watching, that we may be preserved and kept in a most dutiful jealousy for the operation of the Holy Ghost. His mission is to fulfil God's purposes in us and by us. To persevere in refusing to yield ourselves to the operation of the Holy Ghost, that we may be instruments of righteousness, is to quench the Spirit and resist the purposes of the everlasting Godhead. Woe unto us if we do this; we then become the abode of an unclean spirit.

MARCH 11.

"*Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table.*"
—LUKE xxii. 21.

HOW awfully solemn is it to remember that Judas partook of the holy Communion at its first celebration. Two conditions are presented of him previous to that act. First, his murmuring at the waste of the costly ointment. Second, his covenanting with the Jews to sell the Lord for thirty pieces. Disappointed at the loss of three hundred pence, does he determine to make it up by the sale of his Lord? He comes in this state of mind: he receives the cup from Jesus. Satan enters into him, and Judas goes out. Is there no spirit corresponding to the avarice of Judas? Is there no covetousness and selfishness which lead a man to cleave unto the Lord merely for his personal gratification? Is there no temptation to use holy things in order that they may be a gain to us? If there be such a spirit, then must the heart be unclean, and unready to receive a blessing from Jesus. Let our union with the Lord be accompanied at all times by an entire surrender of all we are and have unto Him. We must be self-sacrificed if we would partake of the life of Him Who is the sacrifice for all. Would we receive Him into our hearts? Then must the one object of our lives be to see that His cause and name are delivered from shame,—we must be prepared to lay everything at His feet and devote all to His service.

MARCH 12.

"*And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make. . . . So the people were restrained from bringing.*"—EXOD. xxxvi. 5, 6.

WHAT a lovely scene was that in the camp of Israel, when all the wise-hearted ones were so full of work for the service of the sanctuary that Moses had to issue an order of restraint! And is it not prophetic? Tells it not of that laying aside of all selfishness which shall be manifested when our whole occupation and being become devoted to the honour and service of the Lord? The people were to supply materials for building up the tabernacle. This event tells of the abiding position of the children of God, that, in whatever they are engaged, wherever they are placed in life, they are ever devoting themselves, and all they possess, to the end that the purpose of God in the world and in the Church may be built up. For this end we have been baptized and made members of the body of Christ. For this end we are fed with the bread which is from heaven. We are bewitched of the enemy, when we imagine for a moment that we have business in the world save for such ends and service. "Man's chief end is to glorify God." Let us use, then, all our gifts and occupations to further His purposes and show forth His glory. Such a spectacle of a devoted child is a lovely sight in God's eye—even as was that willing service in Israel's camp.

MARCH 13.

"*And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt; . . . they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land.*"—EXOD. x. 14, 15.

THIS incident suggests a valuable comparison. As the locusts in Egypt darkened the air and destroyed the herbage, so do the ways and schemes of men darken the region of faith and deaden the spiritual life. By human devices, in disregard of, or in opposition to God's plan, we are sorely tried. For these ways are so much more attractive to sense than are God's ways. They are so full of activity and seeming prosperity. They have tales of such reported good to relate, that all who are looking forward to meet the Lord in glory as the realisation of their hope, are shut up to the exercise of faith. Blessed trial of faith! God would prove all who are waiting for the glorious appearing of His Son, whether they are rooted and grounded in His own eternal way and method, or whether they are grounding their hopes upon the carrying out of some mere human schemes. In this age of great bustle and activity, of much boastfulness and planning, we need to be ever reminded that there is a purpose and a way of accomplishing this purpose which are not of man or for man. That purpose may seem for a time to make no progress. This may be God's way to prove whether or not our faith is rested *only* on His word.

MARCH 14.

"*Your lamb shall be without blemish.*"—EXOD. xii. 5.
"*Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.*"—1 COR. v. 7.

THE Passover, with its various rites and observances, is full of most valuable teaching to the members of the Church of Christ. In meditating upon this feast now, let us consider the lamb, whose blood being shed and sprinkled upon "the two side posts and on the upper door-post of the houses," ensured the safety of God's people in that night so fraught with horror to the Egyptians. The lamb offered in sacrifice at the Passover must be the best of the flock—it must be without blemish. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." He is the Lamb provided by God. The best lamb was to be offered and sacrificed by the Israelites; the best was given for us! Christ was God's only and well-beloved Son, He was holy, harmless, and undefiled, He was "without blemish." Such was God's offering and sacrifice for us. Oh, with what jealous watchfulness and scrutiny then ought we to offer and sacrifice the best of what we are and what we possess in the worship of God! A sacrifice "without blemish" was given for us—the best was given. And true love does prompt us to see that the best we have shall be sacrificed to God, and indeed that nothing shall be withheld from Him.

MARCH 15.

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted."—JAMES v. 1, 2.

THERE is an application of these words which points to a deeper evil than the gathering of earthly riches for selfish ends. It is possible to carry the same grasping feeling into spiritual matters, leading a man to desire to heap up spiritual riches for his own private benefit. This is a great evil of the present day. Men hasten to be spiritually rich while the brethren remain in spiritual poverty. Men esteem their spiritual strength as the result of their own watchfulness. They forget the obligations they are under to all the saints—to their faith and prayer. They use religion for their own aggrandisement rather than for helping forward others. Such are in a most evil condition, though looked up to and flattered by many, just as a rich man is fawned upon. Let us remember that all our spiritual blessings are bestowed upon us that we may dispense them among all saints. Rich—we must become poor, that we may stoop to the help of the lowly. Enlightened—we must be willing to abide as in the dark dungeon, if the brethren are there, so that we may lead them out to the light. "How hardly shall they that have riches" (that is, they who seek selfishly to gather up for themselves spiritual riches) "enter into the kingdom of God!" "To do good and communicate forget not." "We are members one of another."

MARCH 16.

"*Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.*"—EPH. v. 1.

"BE ye followers of God" the Father. He spared not His own Son for us. Let us be ready at all times to give up everything for the glory of God—spare nothing that His purpose may be advanced and mankind blessed—yea, hold everything as being not our own, but His. "Be ye followers of God" the Son. He gave Himself a sacrifice for us. "He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Our whole being should be a continual sacrifice unto Christ, and for the blessing of the world He hath redeemed. "Be ye followers of God" the Holy Ghost. He dwelleth in us that He may reveal to us the Father and the Son. He maketh Them known to us, He conforms us unto Them. So we are called to show forth in humanity the glory of God. We are made in the image of God for this end—even that the Father, Whom no one can see, may manifest Himself by us. We are partakers of the life of Christ that we may declare unto men His nature, His character, His will. We would give ourselves more entirely to follow this our calling, we would walk in self-sacrificing love, we would walk in light—even the light that shineth from Christ.

MARCH 17.

"*Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.*"
—LUKE xi. 28.

THE great blessedness of those who hear the Word of God and keep it is, not merely that they thereby are laying up for themselves a good reward, but that they are like arrows in the hand of God, by which He is scattering the power of the enemy, and preparing His way to fill the whole earth with His glory. We grudge not, then, all the probing of our hearts, all the proving to us the deep-seated evil and unworthiness which are in us; for thereby are we being emptied of self, that God may find room within us to carry on His own blessed work. For it is to this we are called—to show forth the glory of God in the sight of all creation. He longs to fill the world with His glory, and therefore He now longs that the members of His Christ may be filled with His power and grace, that they, doing His will, may labour thus with Him to perfect the Church as the Bride of Christ. It is no doubt to the honour of a man when it can be said, he is a pious and a holy man. But this is a smaller view of such a man's character than we should take. A man doing the will of God is thereby *showing forth* the great end of his being—even that by him God may manifest forth His glory and fulfil His purpose in creation. When we behold a man given up to God's will, we see a beautiful type of that time when all the world shall be filled with His glory.

MARCH 18.

"*Thus did Moses: according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he.*"—EXOD. xl. 16.

LET us meditate on the dutifulness of Moses, doing only those things that were commanded him. We know, indeed, how He Who was greater than Moses spoke only the things He heard of His Father. Though equal to the Father, He subordinated His spirit to speak not of Himself, but what His Father gave Him to say. In this age of the world and of the Church, when the pride of intellect and the prevalence of lawless freedom so much prevail, each man is ensnared to say, "My lips are my own," and to speak the things of his own heart, even in holy matters, little considering whether or not these things be according to the mind of God. Very precious is the operation of God within us and by us when we give ourselves up to Him to follow the example of Jesus and of Moses, in saying and doing only as commanded. Looking forward to meet the Lord, and to be altogether like Him in His glory, how acceptable a work of creature renunciation and humility must it be thus to surrender the will to God! My lips are Thine only, O Lord. "O Lord, open *Thou* my lips, and my mouth shall show forth *Thy* praise."

MARCH 19.

"*From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.*"—MATT. xvi. 21.

IT is instructive to read the record of the last days of our Lord upon earth in connexion with "the praise of charity," as set forth in 1 Cor. xiii. He goes up to suffer; but He goes up to love. He goes to give up the ghost; but He goes to hope all things, endure all things, and be not easily provoked. He goes up to bear uncommon treatment; but He goes up to be long-suffering and kind. He goes up to encounter the most unworthy usage; but He goes up to behave Himself so seemly. He goes up to endure the offence of the cross; but He goes up determined not to be offended with men.

As we go up with Him in contemplation of His sufferings, as we go up with Him in imitation of His example, we shall discern more and more of the bitter hatred of the world unto the Lord and His ways. But how will we behave ourselves? How will we feel towards all men? Are we going up to bring down fire from heaven upon the brethren? or are we going up with a holy determination that, more than ever, we will love them unto death? Dare not contemplate the causes of Thy Lord's agony, O child of God—abstain from it, if thou art not prepared to love with a deeper and holier zeal.

MARCH 20.

"*There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? . . . And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.*"—JOHN vi. 9, 11.

THE Lord accepted the lad's offering of the five loaves and two fishes, and He honoured the gift by using it. When it was given up to the Lord He filled the offering with a blessing to others which was not in it when it remained in the possession of the lad. The Blessed Spirit would now have each of us to honour the Lord by freely giving Him always all that we have, that He may have the use of it. Especially are we called to give ourselves unto Him daily, that through us He may carry out His purposes of blessing to others. We may be tempted to say, as we remember our worthlessness, "What are we among so many?" but faith calls to mind that though the instrument be weak, He Who uses it is mighty to render it powerful.

And we may well ask ourselves, What safety is there for us who have partaken of the Eternal Life, the Bread from Heaven, except in our being ever given to the Lord? Satan will the more desire to have us to destroy the vessel thus consecrated; it can be safe only by being ever given to the Lord.

MARCH 21.

"*There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves.*"—JOHN vi. 9.

LET us meditate yet further on this event, as it teaches us how God in His providence so orders events as to meet the circumstances of those who trust in Him. As Jesus walked from day to day, He ever leaned on the arm of His Father. He knew that His Father was present with Him, sustaining Him by divine grace. But He knew His Father's presence also, as it manifested itself in the help brought to Him in the arrangement of God's providence. His faith in God was ever a response to the fact that "all things work together for good." And God honoured the obedience of His Son as He fulfilled the work on which He was sent, for the events that passed day by day were made to minister to Him. In the miracle before us we have an illustration of this truth. A lad with five barley loaves and two fishes was led by Providence to go with the multitude into the wilderness. Here was provision made by God for the work of His Son. Let us imitate the Saviour in His steadfast faith in the continual presence and help of His Father; and let us recognise the Father's presence and help in all, even the seemingly casual, events of His providence.

MARCH 22.

"*A very great multitude spread their garments in the way, others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.*"—MATT. xxi. 8, 9.

IN the narrative of our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, we read of the approbation with which the multitudes received Him. In the narrative of the days that follow, we have the same multitude crying, "Away with Him!" In the narrative of the entry, we have Jesus very popular. In the narrative of the days that follow, we have Him crushed, borne down in sorrow, despised and rejected! How many truths may be learned from these contrasts! That which commends itself as attractive to the feelings and affections of men, if it be of God, will shortly probe and sift their hearts. As the holiness of its testimony is developed, man turns suddenly against that which he seemed to receive. There is something truly captivating about our Saviour's history even to minds not religiously impressed. But when He comes nigh to us with His Word, His ministries, or His dealings, then the thoughts of the heart are revealed, and, alas! it may be, Jesus ceases to be attractive—He is positively rejected. Can it be possible, as Jesus draws closer and closer to sift and cleanse us, that we shall change our hosannas into "It is not fit that He should live?" Lord, help us to remain faithful to Thee!

MARCH 23.

"*Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?*"—ISA. lviii. 6.

THIS is the great discipline unto which we are called. This is that which proves the heart. This is that which tests whether a man is presenting himself a sacrifice to God. The Lord's fast is one which requires far more discipline and self-denial than any fast of man's choosing. It is unceasing. The human heart is so selfish, that it requires an abiding watchfulness to enter into the burdens of others, and never leave these burdens until deliverance comes. How apt are we to tire—to weary of bearing them! How ready to cast them off after an impulse is over! How little depth of devotedness unto those who are oppressed! Again, when the devil comes upon the children of God with assaults, where is our patience with them? Where is the tenderness, the long-suffering, the heart of the Good Shepherd? Is there not a coldness of heart, an indifference of love towards those who are overtaken in a fault? Let us not love, let us not pity for an hour, or for a day, or for a week, but let us enter into and bear the burdens of others, as an act of continual self-sacrifice, until deliverance come forth from God. May the Lord help us in the tremendous struggle of self-denial!

MARCH 24.

"The Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against Him."—EXOD. xvi. 8.

THE history of the children of Israel—especially the story of their murmurings and disobedience—illustrates (as by contrast) what is meant by the true spirit of self-denial, of self-discipline. God had placed them in subjection. God had brought them by a way they knew not. They showed themselves strangers to the spirit of self-denial; for when those who, in the providence of God ruled over them, displeased them, they rose up and spake against Moses and against God. They refused to submit to discipline. They saw not that all rule and all providence were only accomplishing the purpose of God with them. The Lord is setting each one of us in our place in the family, the state, and the Church, and calling upon us to sacrifice our own will that we may fulfil His. The Lord sets all in their places, that His will may be done in ministering through each of us some grace, some excellency, some deliverance to men. Now, in order to accomplish this, He requires that each one sink his own will and selfishness, that each one watch, pray, struggle, that thus the way of the Lord may have free course in each. The Lord is seeking to bless every man. The hearts of His children, then, must be disciplined to act, feel, behave towards every man, not according to our own wishes or feelings, but according to the desire and love of the Lord.

MARCH 25.

"And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words. Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand; also they saw God, and did eat and drink."—EXOD. xxiv. 8–11.

MOSES first sprinkles all the people with blood ere he, with the priests and elders, ascended into the mount, saw God, did eat and drink. They died not in His presence, for they were sprinkled with blood; they lived before Him who stood on a paved work of sapphire in perfect purity.

Oh! what meditation and comfort arise in the heart as we know how, being sprinkled with the blood of the Holy Sacrifice, we can dwell with God,—we can appear before Him with acceptance,—we can commune with Him, receiving from Him the bread and water of life, that we may "eat and drink" before Him. Thus protected and strengthened, we are fitted to hold fellowship with Him, and to become instruments in, by and through whom He may work.

God grant unto us, who have been sprinkled with the blood of His own Son, confidence before Him!

MARCH 26.

"The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."—1 COR. xi. 23, 24.

IT was in the midst of His sorrow—in the midst of the week of His passion—that the Lord Jesus discovered unto the twelve the grace of the holy Communion. It was during the period of His greatest oppression on the part of man, at the time when the disciples themselves ceased to befriend Him, that Jesus opened His heart, and with thanksgiving to God instituted this sacred feast. And there is in this fact much instruction for us. The spirit that must possess our souls in the day of our greatest darkness must be that of thanksgiving, developing more than at any other season the power of that love and forgiveness which should fill our hearts towards all the children of the covenant. The season of our trial must not be the season of our barrenness of spirit. It must be a season of the richest outpouring of spirit towards God and towards man. And herein shall we prove what manner of persons we are. Walking after the flesh, the heart is fretted and shut up when trials oppress; walking in the Spirit, the heart is calm and enlarged in mercy, and deeper in its thankfulness when trials surround. In all your exercises, in all vicissitudes, oh see to it that ye never let go the spirit of peace and gratitude!

MARCH 27.

"And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them . . . . And it came to pass, that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging." —LUKE xviii. 34, 35.

WHEN Jesus spoke of what He was to suffer, the disciples understood not what He said—it was hid from them. Immediately follows the record of the meeting with the blind man; his prayer, and the restoring of his sight. What a significant teaching to the disciples!

And so it is to this day. We hear many truths from Jesus by His ministers; we read still more in His holy Scriptures, concerning which our eyes are shut—we see not the point of what He means.

How urgent, then, should we be to have the eyes of our spiritual understanding opened! Let us take the hint He gave His disciples in the meeting with the blind man! Let the cry go forth from our heart and lips: "O Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." We ought ever to be in the attitude of those who are seeking the removal of all blindness and darkness, that we may clearly apprehend the truth which, day by day, God would bring home to the heart. As we come more deeply to feel the wilful character of our blindness, we shall be driven to cry out the more earnestly, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon us."

MARCH 28.

"And He denied him, saying, Woman, I know Him not."
—LUKE xxii. 57.

THE Lord Jesus had been betrayed, and was now in the high priest's house, and in the midst of those who hated Him and sought His life. He was now passing through the deep flood of sorrow wherewith He, as the substitute of the guilty, was afflicted by God and man. At this season Peter was tempted to deny Him. This is truly a solemn lesson, a salutary warning unto us who are called to know the fellowship of His sufferings. Peter distrusted not himself as the Lord had warned him. We must learn to distrust ourselves, and to walk in the place in which the Lord has set us, with great modesty and godly fear, growing daily in the conviction of our weakness and nothingness. It is not with feelings of terror, but of humility, that we discern how Satan will sift us as wheat. We would take timely warning and betake ourselves to the shelter God has provided, that when the adversary comes he may find us all clad with armour. We would rest our hope, our confidence, our faith, our trust, on the sacrifice of the Lamb. We would withdraw all resting upon our own spiritual attainments, or revelations of truth made to our spirits. We would remember the root of bitterness that is within us, and we would cling to the blood of atonement, apart from which we shall surely deny the Lord at the trying moment.

MARCH 29.

"*He is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter.*"—ISA. liii. 7.

NO feature of our Saviour's character is more lovely than His growing tenderness and meekness as the hour of His trials drew on. The more they compassed Him about, the more tenderly He loved. The more men deceived and disappointed Him, the more His compassions flowed. The nearer He came to the climax of man's bitterness, there began to shine forth more brightly that excellence in His character described in these words, "brought as a *Lamb* to the slaughter."

Though sorely bowed down with sorrow and shame because of our sins and the sins of our fathers, which were laid upon Him, and "brought" Him to the slaughter, nevertheless do we adore the Saviour that, in the midst of His sufferings, there was this lovely development of His name as "the Lamb."

And let us be His followers, in manifesting the tenderness and meekness of loving hearts in the midst of abounding wickedness and opposition to the will of God. When our hearts are well-nigh overwhelmed at the contemplation of the sins which lie sore upon us, then would we remember that, for all these sins, atonement hath been made by the blood of Jesus the Lamb of God.

MARCH 30.

"*They shall look on Him whom they have pierced.*"—JOHN xix. 37.

"GOD forbid," says Paul, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The more we cease to base our hope and trust on the world whose fashion passeth away, the more will faith cleave with tenacious grasp to the cross of Christ. The nearer we are brought to the glory yet to be revealed, the nearer are we brought to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us come this day and behold the Lamb slain! As we gaze with increasing eagerness and trust upon the adorable Saviour, the spirit of humility is deepened within us because of our sins, which brought Him to the cross. God would have the heart and eye fastened upon Him, bearing on the accursed tree the sins of humanity. There would the Holy Ghost convict the heart, saying, "Thou art the man who doth crucify the Lord." There would He make us heartily ashamed of our sins. God seems to say, 'Art thou waiting in expectation the return of Jesus, that your eyes may see Him in His glory, and that you may be raised up to be with Him in His glory? Then wait by the cross. Weary not of the lessons of humiliation there to be learned. Leave not the cross till the moment my Son appears. Watch there. There consolations will also abound.'

MARCH 31.

"*The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*"
—JOHN xviii. 2.

THE nearer the Lord approached to the depths of His sorrow, the more marked was His thankful resignation. His difficulties, sorrows, and trials compassed Him about, but no complaining had a place in Him. Yea, in the night in which He was betrayed He took bread and gave thanks. Such also is and shall be more and more the operation of God in the spirits of His children, as with increasing ardour they drink in the Spirit of Jesus. The more fully we imbibe the fulness of the divine life, and the more we realise our oneness with the risen Saviour and with our brethren, the more shall we experience what appears insuperable barriers to the work given us to do for God. But we would not murmur, nor complain, nor accuse. Let us, out of the depths into which we may be cast, lift up our voice with joy and gladness unto Him who hath promised to be present with and to help His people in all our troubles and adversities whensoever they oppress us. Christ overcame through rejoicing and thankful faith in God. Our victory over all that hinder us must have its source in a like faith.

APRIL 1.

"*They went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.*"—MATT. xxvii. 65.

THEY had sealed the tomb of the Lord and set a watch. According to the plan of the rulers and chief priests, there was no hope that the man Jesus would ever leave the well-secured tomb. But over the body which lay there brooded the Eternal Spirit. God interfered; there was a mighty earthquake, and an angel came from heaven. Unseen by mortal eye Jesus rose from the grave, and in triumph sat the angel on the stone that had been sealed! Come and let us worship and adore the risen Jesus, Lord and Master, only Saviour! Nothing that man could do could detain Thee in the grave, Thou blessed of the Father! And we know that nothing which unfaithful men and wicked devils do to crush the testimony and manifestation of God's power, shall detain in death the faithful ones of Christ. In the present power of His resurrection-life are they ever rising above all spiritual hindrances. And in His resurrection, God gives pledge that the bodies of the saints shall not be held, either by the grave or the flesh, from arising to do the mighty work of God!

APRIL 2.

"And he said unto Him, If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."—EXOD. xxxiii. 15.

THESE words were addressed unto God by His servant Moses. He felt that, without the presence and guidance of Jehovah, no mere human effort would prevail to bring up the children of Israel in the Lord's way. In like manner, no schemes of man to lead God's people forward and perfect them can ever fulfil God's purpose. We walk by faith in the consciousness that Christ lives in us, and that He who said, "Lo, I am with you always," is guiding us by a right way to Mount Zion. We know, we feel His presence; for the Comforter hath come to us from Him, and the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are His children. We are conscious of His presence in that continual sustenance He bestows in the gift of eternal life. Yea, however dark may be our path, however long and dreary the way may seem in which we are called upon to walk, the confidence that God is present, guiding and leading us to meet His Son and enter into His glory, grows stronger and stronger in the hearts of all who follow humbly and faithfully His leadership.

APRIL 3.

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"
—MARK xv. 34.

THE solemn cry of the Saviour on the cross, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" was not the cry of unbelief or impatience. It was the confession of the deep, deep agony of soul which sin caused to the adorable Redeemer. It hid His Father's face from Him. He who took our sins upon Him thus went through the awful result of sin—the hiding of God's countenance. As we who have been made one with Christ enter into our holy calling of filling up the sufferings of Christ in His Body, there will not be wanting on our part an experience like unto His. He is suffering afresh in being still rejected and despised in the house of His friends. They who follow Him whithersoever He leadeth them, and who remain steadfast in their adherence to the Lamb slain, will, by the Holy Ghost, know what it is to be as though God had forsaken His Church. The more fully we are led into communion with the Spirit of Christ, and into acquaintance with His gracious purposes, the deeper will be the agony of soul because of the dishonours which the sins and unfaithfulness of ourselves and our brethren cast upon Jesus.

APRIL 4.

"There came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat."
—MATT. xxvi. 7.

THIS act of faith and love was not performed in the day of our Lord's popularity, not in the day when He attracted the notice of men, not in the day when He was stretching out His hand in power. But it was on the day when His cause seemed to be on the wane, and when sight saw some evident tokens of weakness. It was then the woman came and anointed Him. It was then the woman's faith stretched itself forward beyond the outward appearance, and she spent upon Him the most costly of ointments. Her heart seemed to value Him and cling to Him all the more as He was sinking beneath the load of His woes. There was in her act the expression of a faith which declared that this man, now suffering through weakness, was yet to rise above it all. And there is in all this very profitable meditation as to the condition of spirit with which we should now contemplate the sufferings of the Lord in His Body—the Church. He is one with her, and they despise Him who despise her in the days of her weakness, when the archers do sorely grieve her and shoot at her. Yea, we dishonour Him if, in the days of the Church's weakness and desolation, we look not forth in faith upon her, as Mary did upon the Lord, and love her more dearly still; yea, love her as our chief joy, and bestow upon her all the anointing of grace God has given to us. Let us devote ourselves to her welfare, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.

APRIL 5.

"But when His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste."—MATT. xxvi. 8.

WHEN the woman poured out the ointment on Jesus, it is recorded that the disciples murmured. What followed? They forsook Him and fled, but the woman continued to minister unto Him. Let us follow Peter. We find him in the garden cutting off the ear of a servant. Then we find him, after having left his Master, swearing his ignorance of Jesus among those very servants. Peter had, in fleshly pride, smitten the servant, and then he himself falls before the servants. As we look back upon the history of the Church we may be ashamed of all the cruelty that has been practised by Christians, of all the grudging and murmuring against the honouring of the name of Jesus. Ay, and we have reason to be ashamed that there has been amongst us also so much of a practical denial of the name of Jesus in the presence of men. And let us not fail to adore that love which has borne with us in the midst of our repeated forsakings of the Master, in the midst of our cowardly shrinkings from Him and denials of our knowledge of Him through fear of men. He hath not only borne with us, but looked upon us again, and melted our hearts and brought us into contrite confession and bitter sorrow for our sins. Oh, how such love hideth the multitude of sins, and yet unfoldeth to us the vanity and corruption of our nature!

APRIL 6.

"*And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from before the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.*"—LEV. x. 1, 2.

"*And the Lord spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the Lord, and died.*"—LEV. xvi. 1.

THE solemnities of the day of atonement were announced by God to Moses, after Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord for offering strange fire. Let us meditate before God how awfully solemn it is to approach the living God. We, though called upon to participate in the priesthood of Jesus, though authorised by God to draw near and worship, can do this only according to the order and way of the Lord. Into that order and way we can enter only as the spirit and heart are cleansed through the blood of atonement. To be deeply exercised in the apprehension of the utter nothingness of the creature, and of the alone merits of Him who is the Sacrifice, is essential to appreciating the due order of worship set of God and not of man. The grace of God be upon us that we may indeed fulfil the highest duty of the creature, to give glory to God.

APRIL 7.

"*He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.*"—LUKE i. 48.

THE Virgin Mary found favour with God, and was chosen by Him to the high honour of giving birth to the Lord Jesus. Because of this she shall, throughout all generations, be called "blessed." We must not, because some have put her in a place to which she has no title, refuse to give her that respect and name which God himself has given her.

"All generations shall call her blessed." Jesus says that "more blessed" are they who hear God's Word and do it, than "the womb that bare Him!" Oh how glorious then must be the reward of those who, renouncing every other influence, submit themselves to the authority of the Word of God, and, in the strength given unto them from above, follow its precepts!

The honour put on Mary shall be known in all ages. Not less enduring, not less universal, shall the honour be to those who walk in the fear of the Lord, and obey His commandments. In the day of the Lord's appearing they shall be openly acknowledged as His *favoured ones* before all creation.

APRIL 8.

"*Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"—LUKE xxiii. 34.

ALL appearances betokened that the crucifiers of the Lord knew what they did. The judgment of men might well be justified in pronouncing that they did the deed with their eyes open. But Jesus said to His Father, "They know not what they do;" therefore He cried, saying, "Father, forgive them." He passes not sentence upon His murderers; but, covering with the mantle of charity the foulest deed ever committed under the sun, He attributes it to an error of judgment; and embracing them, even them, in the circle of His love, He prays that this sin be not laid to their charge. The operation of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of those who, being one with the Lord now, wait for His appearing in glory, works the same spirit within them. Discerning how on every hand Jesus is crucified afresh through the resistance of men to His purpose and will, the hearts of the faithful are slow to judge them, yea, rather, they hope all things, that these things would not be done to the Lord Jesus, if men knew what evil they were doing. Hence, though suffering with Him, His faithful followers would nevertheless cry for forgiveness to be granted to the erring brethren.

APRIL 9.

"*That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection.*"
—PHIL. iii. 10.

How will it be manifest that Christ is with us, filling us with resurrection-power, and that life of which He, as the Risen One, makes us partakers with Him? It must be by the grace resting on the faithful to take up His cross in these days and to bear it. He, "for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Before we attain to the manifestation of triumphant glory, there must be triumphant faith in yielding to be crucified together with Him. So that all wrongs, trials, provocations, discoveries of human frailty, will be met in the humble, patient, and submissive spirit which filled the lowly Jesus. All disappointments, trials of faith, prayers seemingly unnoticed by God, chastisements, and blightings of fondest hopes will be received with truly contrite heart, and submitted to, as did the humble Saviour, in reverent acquiescence with the eternal will. But such experience of the cross, instead of lessening, will increase the confidence, that our knowing now "the power of his resurrection" *must* result in a victorious and glorious change of the mortal body when the Risen One cometh.

APRIL 10.

"*When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb.*"—MATT. xxvii. 59, 60.

THERE is a solemn stillness, as it were, over the earth. There has been a desperate conflict. There has been an agitating of all men. God is on the earth manifest in flesh, and the matter has been long at issue, whether men are to yield to Him, or whether He is to be overcome by them. The conflict is at an end. With wicked hands man has crucified and slain the Incarnate One. He lies still in the grave. It is sealed and a watch is set. Man is satisfied that this same Jesus will no longer trouble the earth. Very grave meditation arises in the heart on this matter. More especially on the strong tendency and effort of all earthly ways to crush and put down the will of the Lord. The whole plan of the Jews from the first was to get rid of this Jesus of Nazareth. Their plots were subtly laid for it. So is the plan of men now. A deep laid plot is at work, in all classes of life, to exalt the will and device of man, and to put down and bury the counsel of God. As the Jew watched upon the grave of his victim, so also do men watch deliberately lest the counsel of God get the upper hand among them. Oh, let us be exercised in deep humility and abhorrence of all mere worldly ways and spirit, that set themselves against the Lord and against His anointed.

APRIL 11.

"Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."—LUKE xxiv. 36.

WHEN our Lord spake peace to His disciples, He had just come forth from the agonies of His death and burial. He had been in Gethsemane. He had been in the Judgment-hall. He had been on Calvary. He had been in the grave. He had been with the spirits in prison. And yet, coming from the midst of these surpassing scenes, He was calm. He was more than conqueror. He was all peace. He was the man who had possessed His soul in patience. Surely He has left us an example. He hath sent *us* into the world as the Father sent Him, that we should, amidst all the trials which come upon us as those who "confess Christ," remain in a peaceful mind, having peace in our hearts, words, and actions, towards all. Our Lord ministered peace unto His followers. This was the triumph of faith—the victory that overcame the world in all its stern opposition to Him. So, if we are to minister peace after His example, and in His spirit, our power to do this can only flow from that victory which Christ has given us, and which we must exercise, even the victory over the divers lusts, passions, and temptations of this life.

APRIL 12.

"*He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant. . . . Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him.*"—PHIL. ii. 7, 9.

HERE we have humility and exaltation, suffering and reward. Humility,—He emptied Himself to become man; as man, He took the form of a servant, and humbled Himself even to death. Exaltation,—He received a name which is *above* every name. The apostle calls upon us to "let this mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus." What was that mind? Self-denial, forgetting of self, willingness to receive glory and exaltation in God's appointed way. What is it hinders God's work? Our self-love, self-esteem, self-consideration. Why cannot God bless us as He desires to bless us? Because we will not seek it in God's own way. Jesus sought the glory of God and the good of others. To do the will of God He came, He emptied Himself, He was a servant. The same mind He would have to be in us. Just as we are brought to have no will but that of God, are we rendered capable of bearing and participating in His glory. Let then this mind be in you which was in Christ. *Being God*, He was content to be a man. Being man, He was content to be a servant, and treated as a malefactor! He was content to receive glory as an obedient man, to earn it, and, "as a reward," to receive the worship of the creature.

APRIL 13.

"*Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.*"—MATT. xxi. 5.

MEEK and lowly He came sitting upon an ass, but the voices of the multitude proclaimed Him King. He rode towards the doomed city, where He was to be condemned and to suffer. What a strange procession! The King of Glory riding to be judged by Pontius Pilate, listening to the shouts that greeted Him, which were soon to be turned into curses. Let us think of Him in His journey from Bethphage and Bethany to Jerusalem and Calvary. But let our thoughts be of Him that was and liveth for evermore, and hath overcome death and hell. Let us seek to share His mind, and be willing to give up our life for the brethren. Self-seeking, more especially in religion, is the very opposite of the mind of Christ. And our King cometh, the King (once lowly and meek) cometh to rule and reign. In the faith, and hope, and joy of His future glory, He received and welcomed the "hosannahs" of the multitude, even of children! Yet He wept over the doomed city, where He saw the house of God polluted. Let this mind, the mind of the meek and lowly One, the mind of the sorrowing and weeping One, and yet the mind of the rejoicing and hopeful One, be in us. For our King cometh! Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, for the King of Glory cometh! The King of Glory shall come in, and all creation shall own Him Lord. Everything that hath breath shall praise the Lord.

APRIL 14.

"*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.*"—GAL. iii. 13.

JESUS hangs upon the tree, lifted up between heaven and earth, as though rejected of both. He hangs as the accursed one of God. God sees all humanity in Him, and marks His abhorrence of the vileness of humanity (which vileness Jesus, by imputation, bore and made His own) by turning His face away from His Son, and forsaking Him for a season. "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." Lifted up on the accursed tree, Jesus finishes the atonement for the sins of the world. He is "made a curse for us." It is only as we abide close by the cross, as we cleave to the blood shed on the cross, that we can rest in the peace of Jesus now, or look with hope for His return from heaven. Surely hour by hour, day by day, as we abide in the shelter of the cross, our spirit must become more softened and chastened! Remembering how Jesus suffered for our sins, we would walk with humility, waiting the morning of resurrection glory! Yea, Lord, it is in the depths of this experience we long for the day, to fall down before Thy throne, and say, Worthy is the Lamb.

APRIL 15.

"*All bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. . . . . And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city.*"—LUKE iv. 22, 28, 29.

THERE are delightful truths, sweet doctrines, comforting words, proceeding from the Lord, which man has great pleasure in hearing. Under their influence he goes on for months and years. But it may be the sore of his heart is all the while not probed. Some truth comes from God sooner or later which probes the spirit, and must either be yielded to or put away. If yielded to, then do all the words of comfort become more precious than ever, exercising a power over the man formerly unknown. But if rejected, then does all that he has learned before of God's truth and love tend only to the whetting of enmity towards God. Such was the case with the men at Nazareth recorded in this chapter. The change with them was quick; yet the principle is the same. Though we may sit for years admiring the words which come from His mouth, we may at last take offence at further revelations of His mind, unless the word first received be kept in a humble heart. Therefore let us learn humility, that we may be ready at any moment gladly to submit to His will. Oh, let us beware lest we grieve the Lord by our miserable unbelief, or by our rejection of any of His truth!

APRIL 16.

"*Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.*"—1 PET. ii. 23.

THE behaviour of our Lord in the midst of persecution, and all the multiplied sorrows which darkened around Him at the close of His life, affords subject for much valuable contemplation. Here is one point in the history of the sufferings of Christ very profitable. For the more we contemplate Him in His days of sorrow, the more shall we be relieved from the spirit of judgment, and be filled with the spirit of love towards all. It is when our eye is fixed exclusively on the sins of men, that a spirit of judgment and angry feeling finds a place in our hearts. It is when the eye is fixed on the sufferings of Jesus, because of those sins, that pity and compassion find a place in our hearts. As He died under the load of sin, so He proclaimed the forgiveness of sin. As His enemies pierced His side, so did the effect thereof prove their salvation. And is not this the experience of all who fall down and worship at the feet of the Patient One? We kneel, as it were, at that cross which we have erected, and whereon we nailed Him. We receive at the foot of it perfect forgiveness, which not only comforts the heart, but raises us up to eternal life. Let us arise then, having our souls expanded into greater love and pity, greater preparedness to preach forgiveness.

APRIL 17.

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."—JOHN xx. 19.

"HE made peace by the blood of His cross." He cometh among His disciples, the doors being shut, speaking "peace."

How graciously He comes, leaping over every barrier, to reach His children with peace. They had forsaken Him and fled, yet He comes not upbraiding, but speaking peace. Yea, they had rejected the testimony of Mary that she had seen Him after His resurrection; yea, they counted as idle tales the testimony of the two who had met Him that day at Emmaus. Yet, behold His love! He stands among them who had been so faithless and unbelieving, for all their failings could not quench His love. And He stands among them, not only speaking "peace" to them from His own lips, but breathing new life into them from His own life.

Lord, make us evermore partakers of this peace —help us evermore to manifest this new life.

APRIL 18.

"*Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.*"—1 PET. ii. 21.

CHRIST hath promised to be present with His people. How does He manifest that He is truly fulfilling this promise and abiding with us? By filling us with His power and life, that we may have grace and faithfulness to endure His cross in this age. His calling is our calling. He "endured the cross," and *then* was He "set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Before the manifestation of triumphant glory, there must be triumphant faith in yielding to be crucified together with Him. And the nearer we approach the time when we are to go into the immediate presence of the Lord, the more must the grace of humility grow in the heart. We are on our journey to the heavenly kingdom; but, in the consciousness of our weakness and utter nothingness, it behoves us to take every step with a prostrate spirit and a head bowed down. Now this humility can be learned only by our passing through trials of faith. Let us then receive every such trial as a help in our needful preparation for entering into the glory of the Inheritance. Bending low, let us enter through the gate into the city.

APRIL 19.

"*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.*"—JOHN x. 11, 12.

WHEN the wolf comes and spoils the sheep, the Good Shepherd lays down His life for them. Our blessed Lord thus describes His own action on the cross. The wolf had entered the Jewish fold, and, when there was no help for them, He laid down His life, He was nailed to the tree, that He might restore His people. But this action of laying down His life was for the other sheep of whom He spake, that they might be delivered from the wolf and brought into the "one fold," and under the "one Shepherd." Yet what is now the condition of Christ's flock? Are they not much scattered and exposed to the assaults of the enemy? How the wolf,—all the deceits and wickedness of Satan,—has come in upon the members of Christ's flock. And who careth for these scattered ones? The wandering sheep are not restored, when the brethren have drank in the spirit of the hireling, and failed to bear each others' burdens. Let us this day behold the Lamb of God laying down His life for the brethren. Let us worship Him, let us magnify this His work, let us celebrate His death upon the tree. And as we bend before Him, we too shall be made partakers of that spirit which will lead us to give our lives for the brethren. Let us flee the heart of an hireling, let us not leave the wandering ones. Remember that in Christ's sacrifice we have that which will drive the wolf from the fold.

APRIL 20.

"*Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid.*"—MATT. xxviii. 10.

PEACE, peace is the word of the Lord. When the angel appeared to Zacharias, the word was, "Fear not." When He appeared to Mary, it was, "Fear not." When He appeared to the shepherds, it was, "Fear not." When He appeared to Joseph, it was, "Fear not." When Jesus rose from the dead, the word of the angels was, "Fear not ye." When He met His disciples, the risen Saviour said, "Be not afraid;" "Peace be unto you." How enlarging to the heart are these revelations of the character of God to sinful man! But they are not made unto us that we may rest in them in our evil state. Abiding in the peace of God, and in the consciousness thereof, we are to grow up into the image and character of God. When the message of peace reaches the heart, we are thereby to be stirred up of God to go on, and rise up to do the will and accomplish the purpose of God. Once when Christ spoke peace to His disciples, He followed up His words by showing His hands and His feet. On another occasion He spoke peace, and then breathed on them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Significant actions!—the one pointing to His sacrifice for us as the foundation of our peace; the other indicating that, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, the full effects of the peace are wrought in us.

APRIL 21.

"A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me."—JOHN xvi. 16.

JESUS said, a "little while," and ye shall see me again. The disciples could not understand what He meant by a "little while." Alas! the disciples to this day apprehend not the meaning of the "little while." They rather say, The Lord delayeth His coming. But let us this day meditate upon this saying of the Lord. The hope of His coming again is the solace of His sorrowing children, and the purifier of all their affections. He is the fountain of our life, the centre of our existence, and His absence from us is like widowhood. To hear Him say we shall see Him again in a "little while" is joyful tidings; and faith lays hold of the hope as such a reality, that it overleaps the intervening space, and is so filled with joy at the prospect, that the hope becomes to us a substance. Whether the time be actually long or short, it is a "little while." It is grasped with all the intensity of a bride's love. It is felt to be a "little while," and the days roll on as we tarry here. The life and hope which fill the heart are from above; they are of eternity, and make no calculation of periods. The mind of God is entered into—even the mind of Him who sees the end from the beginning—and the time is spent here in patience and assurance that the "little while" is near expiring, when we must see Jesus.

APRIL 22.

"A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me."—JOHN xvi. 16.

UNTIL the "little while" come to a close, there will be sorrow and struggle, as with a woman in the day of her travail. But the sorrow is forgotten when the man-child is born into the world. And so shall our sorrow when the "little while" is past, and Jesus hath appeared. The sorrow and travail are ill to bear; but can it be otherwise? Oh, how many things there are in us and around us contrary to the love of Him for whom we look! They cause distress and separation. Above all, they grieve and vex the Holy Ghost, the heavenly Comforter sent to comfort us; but Himself grieved all the while. Again, there is in our mortal flesh a constant warring with the Spirit, which produces such toil that we are ever in travail to maintain the integrity of the Divine life. Our own will and the will of God are at variance, and we have ever need to strive to keep the former in subjection. But though such a warfare may cost many sad feelings, there is a feeling of joy and peace above them all, arising from the words a "little while," and it will be all over, and we shall see Him as He is. Faith counts not by these trials; the word of Jesus is so precious to our hearts. The prospect of being with Him altogether in His kingdom is a present support to us, helping us to pass through the dark and cloudy way which encompasses our path.

APRIL 23.

"*The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.*"
—LUKE xxiv. 34.

BECAUSE Christ hath risen, the first fruits of them that sleep, we can triumph in anticipation of assured victory, and sing, "We have escaped." His resurrection from death to immortality insures our being clothed with our immortal body, which is from heaven.

He rose and appeared to Simon. Peter had denied Him, yet the Holy Ghost is particular in mentioning that the Risen One appeared to Simon. Marvellous love, and courtesy, and kindness! What use shall we make of it? We have been much guilty of Peter's sin. We have denied the Lord, and often been ashamed of Him. Are we desolate because of this? Have we been brought down, even to the dust, because of this? Have we partaken somewhat of the sorrow of Jesus for it? Oh! let us with Peter share the joy of His resurrection—receive the life and power of it. Then shall we have comfort, and go, like Peter, and tell all the desolate, of the joy which the risen Lord gives to the sorrowful. Jesus rose from the dead, and *at once* assumed the attitude of a Messenger of Peace. He came from a region of desolation, He had escaped all that sin had done to Him, and behold He breathes peace, and forgiveness, and comfort. Those who are risen with Christ must bear His attitude towards all. Knowing the power of His resurrection, we would go forth speaking peace unto all.

APRIL 24.

"*Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured.*"
—1 COR. X. 10.

THE more the children of God apprehend, by blessed experience, the value of the salvation of God, the more ready are they to yield submission to the discipline of His providence. The oil which the Israelites were enjoined to bring "to cause the lamp to burn always" in the tabernacle, was "pure oil olive *beaten* for the light." And that our lights may shine, that our lamps may burn brightly before God and man, we need that our spirits be chastened. This is not easy to the natural heart. Only, however, as we bear the discipline, are we fitted for the service of God. Let us see what is the spirit we should manifest. In the darkest trials of Jesus, He gave thanks. In the sore trials of Israel in the wilderness, they murmured. Let us follow the Lamb, and, under the heaviest trials and disappointments, let us preserve our souls in humble meekness. After the example of our blessed Lord, may we, when beaten down in sorrow, nevertheless have always thankful hearts, whose trust is in our heavenly Father's protection. We would kiss the rod wherewith we are chastened, in joyful confidence that we have obtained salvation, and are thus preparing for its everlasting enjoyment.

APRIL 25.

"These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."—DEUT. vi. 6, 7.

THE injunctions upon the Jew to have his whole domestic life pervaded by the laws of God are most solemn. How much more solemn to the members of the Church of Christ! What can be more honouring to the Lord than to behold a people regulating all their affairs, and disciplining their hourly deportment, under the abiding influence of the fear and the love of God? It is our joy to behold the Lamb and to worship Him. What joy must it be to Him to behold such a spectacle on earth as persons and families living only to please Him! We worship and serve God, not merely for our benefit, but that thereby God's work may be done. And our acts of worship can be honourably fulfilled only as the life of God pervades the whole being of the worshipper. To worship the living God requireth the full surrender of the soul in the holy act. But this cannot be assumed for an occasion. It is the result of a life spent, hour by hour, in intense jealousy to please Him and keep His charges.

Blessed Jesus! the worshipper of the Eternal, and Thyself now also the object of our worship, Thou art our example in all holy worship and holy living.

APRIL 26.

"*Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.*"—LUKE iv. 1.

JESUS was full of the Holy Ghost when He went into the wilderness. More than that, He had just been praised and extolled by the Eternal Father: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus He had the indwelling feeling of righteousness; He had also the joy of the outward and audible testimony. If any one had a right to glory, Jesus was that one. He knew that boasting was not a righteous condition of the creature, but that he should "glory in the Lord." He knew that a man's life and strength consisted not in the abundance of the things he possessed. He refused all trust and confidence in them. He felt that the abundant grace He had was God's gift to Him as a creature, as man. And the possession of such honours and such testimony withdrew Him not from fixing His eye and heart upon God the Father. He withdrew not His affections from the Father of lights to centre them in that Father's gifts. Hence His strength against temptation. Hence His prayerful and dependent spirit. Hence His cries for help, as recorded in the Psalms. By looking, then, to the example of Jesus, we learn true humility. We have received many gifts—above all, the gift of the Holy Ghost; but we must not glory in these gifts or graces. We must ever lean upon the Giver of them all. Then shall we prevail over Satan and resist his temptations.

APRIL 27.

"*He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts.*"—MARK i. 13.

THE record of Scripture, that the Lord Jesus was with "the wild beasts" during the forty days of His temptation, is instructive. The lions were a formidable foe to Daniel on that night when he was cast into the den. He cried unto God, and God heard him; he believed in God, as one who was helpless; therefore was he delivered. So did Jesus for forty nights. He felt His helplessness as a creature. The fulness of the Holy Ghost, which He had just received, led Him, in these circumstances, to more urgent cries unto the Father. And the mouths of the lions were stopped in the presence of the faith and dependence of a faithful creature, unto whom came help from the Almighty God. Now let us consider what instruction there is in all this to us. We have entered upon a conflict with evil spirits, symbolised by "the wild beasts,"—with evil persons—with false principles—such as perhaps the Church has not hitherto been exposed to. Who shall escape these devouring lions? Who shall come forth untouched in a hair of their head, save those who abide in faith and prayer, and in the dependence of conscious helplessness? The evils by which we are beset are too great to be resisted; the power of the devil is too strong to be cast off by any strength short of present help from the Lord Jesus on high. Yea, the only help which will satisfy the need of the faithful followers, is the actual presence of the Deliverer in their midst.

APRIL 28.

"Whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not, but when it was taken up they journeyed."—NUM. ix. 22.

THE Lord was bringing Israel forth from bondage into Canaan. He made no haste, save in the act of bringing them out. After that His dealings were characterised by delay. This was in order to prove the children of Israel. It was to the land of Canaan they were journeying. But there was a better inheritance still than Canaan, even an obedient and submissive heart to God, without which the fields of Canaan would blight and wither. That inheritance they had in their power at all times. And now, as they wandered in the desert, they were put to the test, as to whether or not they counted God's will their portion. For if they did not that when there was no outward or seductive influence, how would they do it when surrounded with goodly possessions? True, they were on their way to Canaan: but there was a sense in which it mattered not when they were there, provided they had God's presence where they were. He tried to prove this to them in many ways. How full of deep meaning is all this to us! How comforting should it be among the dark ways that encompass us! It is good that our hearts are set on the inheritance ready to be revealed; but it is good for us to know that we may possess the richest gem of that inheritance—submission to and enjoyment of God as our only portion. He proves us whether we will acknowledge Him now in the wilderness, that we may enjoy Him in the glory.

APRIL 29.

"If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."—JOHN xvi. 7.

TO His sorrowful disciples the Saviour was desirous to show the necessity for His departure from them; even that His work in heaven *for* them, and His work on earth *in* them, might be accomplished. In order that a people might be prepared for Him when He should come again, He gave the promise of the Comforter. We inherit that promise. It is even now being fulfilled in our midst. Christ is baptizing with the Holy Ghost. The promise shall be yet more fully realised. But our souls rest upon it as yea and amen in Christ Jesus; and we long for its entire fulfilment, in the bringing about of all that must result from the presence of the Holy Ghost within us. How earnestly ought we to desire that which Christ doth promise! How should we long to be guided into all truth! How should we pray that the name and presence of Jesus in each and every member of His Body may be glorified, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! How should we yield to the Sanctifier, that we may be conformed to Christ's character in every thought, word, and deed! But in addition to all this, God doth promise, by giving the Holy Ghost, even the changing of the vile body, and the fashioning it like unto His glorious body. To this we look forward, to this we strive to attain. Let us live as they who are looking instantly for the change. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." This is our hope!

APRIL 30.

"*Thy kingdom come.*"—MATT. vi. 10.

WE who daily pray "Thy kingdom come" have daily need to cultivate the spirit of loyalty unto the King in His present manifestations of rule, that we may thus be prepared to render Him all reverence and obedience when He cometh forth to reign in visible glory, in His kingdom yet to be revealed. The faithful are called upon now to exercise their heart in obedience and subjection to the commandments and order of the Lord. The work of God is ever to exalt the authority of Christ over men. That authority is exercised amongst us at this time, though the kingdom and manifested personal rule of the King be not yet revealed. Faith sees His authority now existing on the earth, in the nations, the Church, the family, as clearly as sight shall see it in the age to come. Faith has no doubt about it; nor is the mind staggered with the weaknesses of mortality with which that holy authority is shrouded. Thus does the heart even now learn to stand in awe of the Lord, and to fear His great and terrible name. And thus are the faithful prepared to receive Him coming again, and to be of that kingdom where nothing shall be tolerated but perfect submission.

MAY 1.

"*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.*"—MATT. XX. 1.

WE have, by the gracious act and goodness of the Lord, been brought into God's vineyard, and we are all hired, in the hand of the Master, to do Him service therein. Now, He hath said to each and all, "Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." The reward is with Him to bestow, and the spirit of the true servant is contented with this assurance; he does not keep reckoning up what he ought to receive; he knows it must be "whatsoever is right." Yea, the operation of the Holy Ghost in the heart draws the brethren to work out of very love to the Lord and Master. All desire of self-seeking, all grudging, all lifting up of ourselves in comparison with others, can find no place in the heart of those who labour for the glory of God and the good of others. They love the appearing of the Lord and Master "when the even is come;" it is His presence they desire, and not, primarily, the reward He bringeth with Him. From those who are filled with this desire, the ambition of mere personal exaltation passes away. Yea more, there is wrought within the heart the blessed grace which obeys the precept, "in honour preferring one another." Lord, make us ambitious to work for Thy glory only!

MAY 2.

"*He is despised and rejected of men. . . . He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*"—ISA. liii. 3, 12.

WHAT contrasts present themselves in the crucifixion of Christ!—the character of man contrasted with the character of God manifest in the flesh. Behold, what is the result of man's feelings and desires—to persecute his fellow-men and crucify the Son of God. Behold the love of Jesus, while bearing the load of man's guilt and contempt—to seek man's deliverance and blessing.

Behold man rebellious against God, saying, "Away with Him!" Behold the man Jesus yielding up Himself even to death in His obedience. Behold man casting out and delivering over to crucifixion One who had been the kindest and most compassionate citizen among them. Behold Jesus, forgetting His own sorrows, and remembering the needs of His mother. Behold men reviling and blaspheming. Behold Jesus saying, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." Behold man condemning the Innocent. Behold Jesus, the Innocent One, forgiving and comforting the guilty sinner hanging beside Him. One more contrast: Behold the utter carelessness of man as to the enjoyment of God's presence. Behold the deepest agony of Jesus, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" Here we see the result of sin. It hides God from the best of creatures. Our sins, imputed to Him, did this.

MAY 3.

"He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read, and there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias."—LUKE iv. 16, 17.

JESUS, at the close of forty days, resisted the devil by a humble use of the Word of God. Now we find Him in the synagogue at Nazareth fulfilling the first act of His ministry, in an exposition and application of a passage of Holy Writ, so that the hearts of the people were searched. He was mighty in the Word. He rightly divided it. He proved it a two-edged sword. He opened it up in a new manner. This was the reward of His holy reverence for it in His contest with Satan. Let us learn some wisdom from this. Many are the snares which the devil spreads for our feet. We get entangled in them from an overweening confidence in our own strength, instead of a simple reliance on the Word of God. It should be more familiar unto us, that we may be well instructed stewards of God and members of Christ. We need an increase of holy reverence for it. We need to know it more as the living Word of Him in whom we are incorporated, and who dwells in us. That which is "written" is the expression of His mind who hath overcome the adversary, and who giveth us the victory.

MAY 4.

"*The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God and against Moses.*"—NUM. xxi. 4, 5.

HOW ready were the Israelites to vow unto the Lord to destroy the Canaanites! How bold they were when the Lord delivered them up to them! Then they journeyed, and the way by which they were led was wearisome—not the way they approved of. And what did they? what did the men of valour who had destroyed the cities of Arad, king of Canaan? They became as fools; they murmured against God and against Moses, because they were discouraged. How bold, and ready, and obedient are our spirits when there is something to gratify us—to lift us up! But when God is leading us in a contrary way, and trying our patience, how ready are we to murmur! All murmuring is against God. All former acts of kindness and tender mercy are forgotten. But let us see what happened? Fiery serpents bit the people. They were glad to confess. Behold how God broke forth in such pity for His people. He set a way for Moses to heal them. We have in this incident a lesson that we show humility and lowliness of mind under trials. There is also a lesson to the guides of the people, yea, to all, of the spirit in which we should meet the trials of others, and obtain deliverance for men when reaping the bitter fruits of a murmuring spirit.

MAY 5.

"As they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."—MATT. XXVI. 21.

How heart-searching to the disciples was this sorrowful and startling announcement! How instantaneously did it suggest to every heart the question, "Lord, is it I?" Let us not flatter ourselves that the possibility of betraying the Lord is now for ever past. What is done to His Church is done to Him. And who knows what suffering and persecution yet awaits the Lord in His Body the Church! Besides, does not Scripture speak of crucifying Him afresh, and putting Him to an open shame? What, then, shall prove the great salvation of His saints? The humble, the lowly, the penitent heart; the heart which spurns not, in pride and self-confidence, the idea that it could possibly fail; the heart which is conscious, on the contrary, that it "is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," and that, if left to itself, there is no depth of wickedness to which it would not rush. This is the heart which prostrates itself at the Saviour's feet, exclaiming, "Lord, is it I?" Yet it humbly confideth in His grace that He will preserve it from the wickedness of such terrific apostasy. Let this be the spirit which animates us, as we solemnly meditate upon the sin of Judas.

MAY 6.

"*He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*"—LUKE xiv. 11.

A VERY touching commentary upon these words is to be found in the life and ascension of our Lord. He who was the humblest of men was carried up in great triumph into heaven. He is highly honoured; but before His honour, came the most affecting humility. He is put in possession of riches, honour, and life, but He earns His title to these by His humility. His humility is seen through all His ways. "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, &c." Yea, after His resurrection, behold His readiness to be constrained to go and eat with His disciples. Behold His humble acquiescence in the arguing of the heart of Thomas. Surely His ascension into heaven was that of Him who had descended first. The Lord is placing us in like circumstances that we may work out this humility. Are we looking up with the eye of faith to our ascended Lord, that we may follow Him whither He hath gone? Then the message to us seems to be, Go ye and do likewise. And surely we may not grudge the many trials, the many siftings, the untoward circumstances in which we may be placed. For in and by them all we are learning humility. The discoveries of evil in our hearts, the sad conviction of sin that is forcing itself upon us, may well humble us. But this humility shall prove the harbinger of coming glory, exaltation, and ascension into heaven.

MAY 7.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep His charge, and His statutes, and His judgments, and His commandments, alway."
—DEUT. xi. 1.

HOW vast is the place which the Holy Scriptures occupy in the purpose of God! They are the record of His mind unto us: they are the witnesses of His truth, and the witnesses against all who depart from His ways. And now that in God's providence they circulate almost from house to house, how solemn is the sign that men have gone far from their precepts, and that there can be no escape from the judgments that must follow, save by returning with all the heart and soul and mind to keep the statutes and commandments of the Lord!

On all men unto whom the Holy Scriptures have come there lies solemn responsibility; on all to whom these Scriptures have come, together with the living Word of preaching, lies still more responsibility; and on all to whom both the Scriptures and preaching have come, together with feeding on the Word made flesh, lies responsibility the most solemn. Responsibility for what? To walk in the ways, statutes, commandments, and judgments of the Lord, *keeping* His law.

MAY 8.

"*They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.*"—REV. xv. 3.

THE Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb! "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." God gave forth the announcement of His holy commandments by the mouth of His servant Moses. In "Moses" we have the holiness and righteousness of the Almighty Jehovah placed before us; and to His holiness and righteousness we must be conformed. In "the Lamb" we have displayed the great love of our heavenly Father towards His rebellious children, in giving His Son to die as a sacrifice for them.

Who shall sing "the Song of the Lamb," but they who are able to sing "the Song of Moses?" They who know the joy of the sacrifice of the Lamb, know also of the unswerving and awful righteousness of the Law of the Lord. And who are able to sing "the Song of Moses," and rejoice in the statutes and judgments of the Most High, save they who have submitted to the atonement of the Lamb?

The Song of Moses and the Lamb! Mercy and truth met together! Righteousness and peace kissing each other! Thus keeping the Law and trusting in the Sacrifice, we are making ready to sing the Song.

MAY 9.

"It came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."—LUKE xxiv. 51.

HE who is the Resurrection and the Life cannot tarry on the earth. For the space of forty days He has gone out and in as a stranger and pilgrim. Now He ascends whilst in the very act of blessing His disciples. He ascends, not as one who was wearied with blessing, He ascends in order to enlarge and multiply the blessings He would pour out upon His children who follow after Him. Therefore do we worship and adore Him, and we wait in fervent expectation of receiving from Him an increasing supply of grace, that we may go forth and bless all men; yea, that we may ascend up to be with Jesus, and receive overflowing blessings to shed down upon all creation. Not yet in person, but in faith, we follow Jesus into the heavens; and there we behold Him still lifting up holy hands, and interceding for all men before the throne of His Father, just as He, on his departure, lifted up holy hands to bless His followers. What is in His heart should ever be in ours; what He is now doing, we should ever be doing likewise.

MAY 10.

"*After the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven.*"—MARK xvi. 19.

To the Christian who would ever "behold the Lamb of God," there is no period or event in the life of Jesus that is not full of valuable instruction. Our text this morning directs the eye of faith to the contemplation of Him as He ascends into heaven. He came from heaven to earth, that He might bring the gift of Life to perishing humanity. And now He leaves the earth and ascends to heaven; but it is not to forsake or forget us. He goes, of necessity, to carry forward still further the work whose foundations He laid when He died on the cross. He goes, that the Holy Ghost may be sent to make man a partaker of the life of the risen Saviour. He goes as "the first-born of many brethren" who shall follow Him thither. His resurrection led Him forward to His ascension to the right hand of the Father. We who have "risen with Him" must also ascend to be with Him. We "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Let us look forward with joy and gladsome preparation to the time when we shall be called to ascend to be with Jesus.

MAY 11.

"*Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.*"—COL. ii. 12.

GOD'S children, in all ages since they were baptized into Christ, and received of His newness of life as the first-fruits of the dead, have known somewhat of the blessedness of being raised up with Him. But this blessedness, so long as we remain in mortal flesh, is realised only in a partial measure. Great as has been the peace with which we have been visited through the communication of Christ's life unto us, it has been only as a beginning. The fulness of it is yet in prospect. We have the first-fruits of the Spirit; we wait in hope for the full harvest which is to be gathered at the time of our "adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Let us press on to the perfecting of what has been begun. The newness of life now known, is but as an infant's life compared to that of the full-grown man. Faith reaches forward to be brought into the full reality of that "newness of life" in the morning of the resurrection, and of change at the appearing of Christ. The desire of Jesus and the desire of His children are one—not to remain satisfied with the measure of His fulness which we now possess, but to attain unto that which will be manifested when our bodies are glorified like His own!

MAY 12.

"*And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail.*"—MATT. xxviii. 9.

THE last words Jesus said upon the tree were, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit." The first words that are recorded that He spake when He rose from the dead, were "All hail!"

How the heart of Mary must have thrilled when she knew that Jesus had risen from the dead! How she ran to bring the tidings to the apostles! And tells not Mary's joy of how our hearts will thrill and beat when, by the power of the Holy Ghost, "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality?" Oh, then, what swift feet, what earnest souls shall run with the tidings through all the bounds of the earth to bring every man to Jesus! Jesus, blessed Lord and Master, when shall Thy gracious "All hail," Thy generous "Peace be unto you," fall upon the ears of all men as words of fire from the lips of Thy servants? Let us ever be ready to say, "Thy will be done," that we may be prepared, as His messengers, to welcome creation back to Him, and say, "All hail!"

MAY 13.

"*That Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance.*"—EPH. i. 13, 14.

LIKE the disciples at Jerusalem, we also now wait for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. In reality we have, indeed, the first-fruits of the Spirit, but we wait for the fulness of the same at the appearing of Jesus. The more we know of our heavenly calling, the more earnestly do we wait for the complete glory of the Spirit. If rightly exercised in heart, we realise that until then we are not able to manifest the perfection of God. To that we press forward. They who walk in the Spirit regard it as no strange word when they are told that the end of all earthly things draweth nigh, and that therefore there is need of watching and prayer. As those who are born from above, they long for the dawning of the day when God's purposes shall be completed, His glory fully shown forth, and His will perfectly performed. Having received the first-fruits of the new or eternal age which is to take the place of the present condition of things, we become most watchful that we miss not the glory then to be revealed. This appears to be the wholesome condition of heart in which to wait upon the means of grace, and to look for the appearing of the Lord. Let us be faithful in the use of the measure of grace already given to us, thus shall we be fitted to receive the gracious overflowing of the Holy Ghost.

MAY 14.

"*We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*"
—2 COR. v. 20.

THE Lord Jesus fulfils the office of Mediator between God and man. He manifests His mediatorial character upon earth now by means of those whom He hath united to Himself, and through whom He works and carries forward His purposes. Our attitude, then, is one of mediation, of interceding with God for all men. Standing between the living and the dead, we are to beseech God for men, and beseech men for God. For this end we need to be sustained by the life of Him who appears ever in His Father's presence for men, and ever breathes forth unto men the words, "Return," "Repent," "Come away." Feeding on the Eternal and Resurrection-life, we are inspired by the Holy Ghost to continue day by day this twofold action of the great Mediator between God and man. When we realise this our high calling, what power fills our act of intercession before God? what assurance that the act accomplishes a real blessing, and brings down an abundant answer? Again, as we intercede with man, what power then accompanies the declaration of the Word of Love. Oh! let us not weary in this blessed work of intercession before God for others, and with others for God. The Holy Ghost, who waits upon the footsteps of the great Mediator, will accompany our message of mediation.

MAY 15.

"*Ever follow that which is good.*"—1 THESS. v. 15.

CARE should be taken by us that we present no undue preference for one truth to the exclusion of others. Our faith must be edified, instructed, and balanced. Thus, however much we rejoice in the atonement of the Lord Jesus, in the work He did in incarnation, we must not forget that self-discipline, and that self-denial, without which the work of Jesus will prove unavailing to us. Is there not a danger while exalting His work, while speaking of Him as our Saviour, as our only acceptance with God, of falling into the snare of words, and excusing ourselves the trouble of taking up our cross? Are we, while ever adoring Him as our only sacrifice for sin, giving the due place and weight to such expressions as the following? "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor." Or, "Charity will cover a multitude of sins." Or, "If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father in heaven forgive you your trespasses." Or, "Except a man deny himself and take up his cross, he cannot be my disciple."

All these words must have their due place in the cleansing of the heart. We are truly honouring the work of Jesus, only as we are thus following up His work. This requires a constant keeping of the body of sin in subjection.

MAY 16.

"*Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak.*"—JAMES i. 19.

IN connexion with this admonition, we may bear in mind what our Lord testifies respecting the Holy Ghost. "He shall not speak of Himself; whatsoever He shall hear, that shall he speak." The Comforter comes not to bear witness of Himself, therefore He speaks the words of Him of whom He bears witness. We are the channels through whom the Holy Ghost delivers His testimony. How solemn then the responsibility laid upon us, that we speak not hastily, that we be ready to open the ear that we may be "swift to hear" what the Spirit saith unto us! The admonition of the text cannot mean that the children of God are to refrain from speaking about the "things touching the king." Saith David, "My pen is the pen of a ready writer." Saith St Paul, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." The use of the tongue is an awful responsibility. It must be as a well-spring of life. All we speak should be the utterance of the wisdom of God. The heart should be in such subjection to the mind and will of God, that nothing which proceedeth from our lips should be contrary thereto. Let us be very slow to speak either that which is of our sinful flesh, or that which is hastily conceived in the imagination.

MAY 17.

"*Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.*"
—MARK xv. 37.

THE Saviour dies. The blood is shed which for ever puts away sin. The one perfect, sufficient atonement is made to God. Sin is condemned in the death of the Holy One and the Just. No more lift up *your* heads, ye sons of Adam, for it is through death alone you can ever appear before God. Bear yourselves meekly and humbly, ye dwellers in a corrupt and fallen flesh. Behold, what is the result of all that is in thee! Such is the depth of thy deceit and corruption, that, under the weight of it, thy Saviour sinks and dies. Thou boastest in thy mortal flesh; but behold thy Saviour must crucify it; even He cannot abide in it. His pure Spirit must leave it with a loud cry, as if fleeing from it: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Let us all, then, hide our faces; let us cry "Unclean, unclean," until the day He comes again. But be filled with peace. Thy sins have drawn His precious blood from His veins. Behold, He maketh that blood to be as thine, and thou art cleansed from all thy sins. Come and behold His love for thee even in death. His dying accents to His God are for thee. His dying attitude is towards thee: for see, His head is hanging down towards thee, O sinful man, yet dearly beloved of the Lord!

MAY 18.

"*This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.*"—HEB. x. 12.

HE that ascended is the same also that descended. Jacob saw angels ascending and descending. This foreshadowed the Lord's work. Jesus learned first to descend ere He was exalted to the right hand of the Father. Thus has He set an example. But we are slow to learn the lesson. We feel it hard and trying to the old man to be brought down and laid low. This, however, is the only way of deliverance. Jesus descended lower and lower in the depths of His humiliation the nearer He approached the time when He was to ascend in glory. We may never be surprised, then, that we may be made to feel more and more our weakness, and the nothingness of all creature-strength, as the day draws nigh when we are to ascend to sit with Christ in His glory. It is by the power of His death and burial that we are enabled to participate in the nothingness which is stamped upon all that is the creature's. It is by His ascension that we are enabled, from the very depths of descent—from the dust of sorrowful confession in word and deed—to rise up and plead before God for all men, to ascend and be one with Jesus in His work of intercession. Blessed foretaste of the day when we shall go up to Him in person!

MAY 19.

"*Watch, therefore.*"—MATT. xxiv. 42.

THE Lord ever speaks with us, deals with us as *saved ones*. But yet He deals with us as being in a state of probation. We are all, He says, "Children of the light;" yet He adds, "Therefore let us not sleep;" "let us watch and be sober." There is much instruction and much warning in this consideration of our position before God and the world. We wait to be received by the Lord at His appearing; but we wait in a time of great surrounding spiritual darkness. The children of darkness know not their state; they imagine they are filled with light, because they have much worldly knowledge. We must turn from the darkness and reflect the "True Light." Again, we wait in a time of unusual excitement. The scenes passing in Christendom at the period of the Lord's advent are, and will be, very stirring—men being moved as with strong drink, full of false joy and false hopes. This is a condition very bewitching to the unsubdued heart. We must watch diligently, lest we be brought into the whirl of this unholy excitement. Oh, in the presence of many dangers there is needed a constant watching and unceasing prayer!

MAY 20.

"He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive."—JOHN vii. 38, 39.

ST JOHN says the angel showed him a pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Jesus, it is added, spake these things of the Holy Ghost. Rivers of living waters are said to flow from us when we manifest to all that we possess the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Jesus hath ascended. He hath received gifts for men. The fulness of the Holy Ghost is in Him, with Him, and upon Him. He is our Head, and we the members of His Body. We are one with Him, and all that is His is ours. We rejoice, then, in the glorious fact that we possess this fulness of the Spirit in and with Him, for we have Him in whom the fulness dwells. We cannot yet contain and manifest this fulness, but in the triumph of faith our spirits rise far above the present frailty; and we wait, urgently wait, looking for the return of the Lord, to change the vile and raise the corrupt bodies of the faithful. For then shall flow out of us that fulness of the Holy Ghost, as the River of Life from the throne, healing all wherever it flows.

MAY 21.

"*They brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord.*"
—LUKE ii. 22.

THE presentation of the Lord in the temple calls upon us to renew our faith in the dedication of the little ones of the flock of Christ. It was a real and solemn transaction between God and the creature when the babe Jesus was given up to Him. Can we imagine Joseph and Mary treating it as an empty ceremony? Can we imagine the spirit of the Infant Saviour counting lightly by it? Now, is it a less awful and real thing on the part of parents dedicating their children to the Lord in holy baptism? The whole being of Joseph and Mary was wrapped up in the fact, that He whom they took to their home was given up to God. Their whole household arrangements, the management of their trade, their own movements, words, and behaviour, were framed to suit the training and development of this child. Under this behaviour of theirs the child's spirit found such a response, that He grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and the grace of God was upon Him. Such would, in its measure, be the history of every baptized child, if the parents never had a thought beyond the fact that the little ones were called to be kings and priests to God as really as Jesus was. With what zeal then ought parents to watch over their children dedicated to God! Then would the spirit live and grow.

MAY 22.

"*Ourselves also which have the first-fruits of the Spirit.*"
—ROM. viii. 23.

THE more we realise that we "have the *first-fruits* of the Spirit," the more shall we press forward to attain the fulness; not despising that which we now possess, but making such diligent use of it as to manifest that we are preparing for the full measure. Many things must of necessity happen to cool and damp the ardour of Christian love and charity. *Walking* in the Spirit is so contrary to the world, that the world will be offended at the manifestation of God's mind and way. The world has so many ways of its own, so many views of religion peculiar to its temporising policy, that it cannot bear to be brought in contact either with God's way, or with the superior and high-toned religion which results from walking in the Spirit. In such circumstances comes the trial of our hearts, the proving of the value of the "first-fruits." Will you allow your charity to be cooled? or will it grow all the more, the more it is hardly thought of? Will *you* love all men even when *they* keep back from you "brotherly kindness"? Will you refuse to use your gifts for the good of others, though your gifts be despised? Oh, let us walk in the Spirit, let us press on to perfection!

MAY 23.

"*Bless and curse not.*"—ROM. xii. 14.

TO us is the word addressed, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." We are surrounded by such an atmosphere of evil as no tongue can describe. How are we to conduct ourselves in the midst of it? We must not be overcome of it. Yea, we must overcome it. And how? Even by good. We are not to parley or argue with the evil. We are to conquer it by an unceasing act of doing good. Such is indeed our position. We are to be in God's hands not only that we may be shielded from the spirit of the world, but that we may bring down blessings upon the world. This we do, not by cursing, not by speaking against or abusing man, but by bearing their burdens, and carrying their sorrows before the Lord. The devil uses men that he may flood the world with evil. Let us give ourselves to God that He may use us to flood the world with blessings. The devil sows divisions, and causes strife among the brethren. Let us turn unto all the brethren and say, "Peace be with you." The devil seeks to fill men with infidelity; let us turn to them and say, "The Lord be with you." Thus we overcome the evil.

MAY 24.

"I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me."
—MATT. viii. 9.

GOD gives to every man the privilege of a certain weight, influence, and authority in that place which has been assigned to him in society or in the Church. He bears upon him the stamp of *a man* —an image of God. He is born to rule, to have dominion, and thus to be a witness of Him who rules all. Much more is this true of him as a regenerate being, a partaker of the Divine nature. And yet where is dignity? where is influence? where is this weight of character? Alas! is it not so that rather the reverse of all this is seen? The most common relationships are not subject unto him—far less can the powers of the devil be. We find a word of wisdom on this subject in the account of the centurion. He was a man of rule; he had but to say "do," and it was done; "go," and they went. But his power to rule was not independent of a previous condition of mind. *First of all*, he says "I am a man under authority." That was the secret of his rule. 'My spirit is tutored to obey, therefore it is ready to rule.' So it was with Jesus. The power Jesus had over devils and diseases sprang from the power He had to obey, to yield, to be subject in all things. Let us remember this, and seek the same spirit.

MAY 25.

"*There came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy.*"—MATT. viii. 5, 6.

THE centurion had tutored his spirit to obey; therefore he knew how to rule. The account he gives of his rule is, as it were, very peremptory. But it was the rule of love. It was the rule that upheld men in their places. It was a sustaining rule. It was a rule that drew forth the esteem of ruler to ruled, and ruled to ruler. It bore the burdens of men. It condescended to those of low estate. This man of rule, it appears, had a servant grievously tormented. His case had taken a deep hold of the master's spirit, insomuch that, notwithstanding his modest humility, he ventured to approach Jesus on his behalf. He came not to this celebrated Teacher to ask anything for himself. It was to ask for a servant; and Jesus healed him. There is a deep lesson here for all set in places of authority and command. Their rule must be one of love. Obedience is asked of those under authority; sheltering care and loving protection are to be exercised by those having authority. The loving rule of the centurion shadows forth the love of Him unto whom we are subject—whose rule over us is paramount and absolute.

MAY 26.

"*I overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.*"
—REV. iii. 21.

THE ascent of Jesus to the right hand of the Father, and His session there, is one of triumph. It is a leading of captivity captive. It is to make His enemies His footstool. To prevent us from ascending to that honourable place was ever the desire of Satan. But God's purpose is that His children be raised to the throne of glory; and this purpose must prevail. And lo! Jesus, the second Adam, the Head and Representative of His people, is there. The heir hath taken possession; but we are heirs and joint-heirs with Christ, therefore our possession is secured by His presence at the right hand of the Father. Yea, the doom of His enemies is sealed. That which holdeth the world in bondage is itself captive. Jesus hath purged away the sin of the world, and surely He shall redeem it from the grasp of the enemy. The place where He sits is the place of triumph and victory, and He delays the manifestation thereof until the completion of the gathering out of the saints, with whom He shall come forth to execute the judgment written. He is at God's right hand, ever bestowing the Father's promise of the Comforter. Let us yield to the operation of the Holy Ghost. He is at God's right hand, that His enemies may be subdued.

MAY 27.

"*I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.*"—JOHN xiv. 18.

BEFORE Jesus ascended, He promised these two things. It is well that we combine them in our meditation this day. They are closely connected. To testify of Jesus is the glory of the Spirit. To give effect to the words and purposes of Jesus is the one object of the Spirit's indwelling within us. If we use what of the Spirit we now possess solely to prepare the way of the Lord, He will more abundantly help us with His manifold gifts. Again, the promise of the coming of the Lord must be fulfilled, in order that the full purpose of the promise of the Holy Ghost may be fulfilled. What we now have of Him is a first-fruits merely, and we press forward to the coming of the Lord to attain the full measure. The husbandman remains not satisfied with the first-fruits. He rejoices over them as a pledge and foretaste of the harvest; he thanks God for them. But his desire is for the full harvest. So we rejoice in the presence of the Comforter now, we thank God for His unspeakable gift. But we know that we have but the first-fruits of the Spirit now, and we use our present position as a vantage-ground to stretch forward, in preparation and hope to receive the full measure when the Lord appeareth.

MAY 28.

"*He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*"—JOHN XX. 22.

ONE of the earliest acts of Jesus upon His resurrection was to hasten to His disciples, to communicate to them that Eternal Spirit who, dwelling in them, might lift them up as His witnesses. Great was the mystery of the Risen Man breathing on the eleven apostles, giving them the Holy Ghost. But we may not stay and wonder at it, and forget that an action as real, as holy, as momentous, passes before us in the holy communion. Though that "breathing," peculiar in itself, cannot now take place in the personal absence of Jesus, yet when he verily does communicate unto us, in the consecrated emblems, His body and blood, there is, in that act, a continual supply to us of the Holy Ghost. The Risen Man is the dispenser thereof; and as He gives His own life, so does He give the presence of the Spirit. Our natural man is ever inhaling new supplies of air at every breath. And so does our spiritual being receive renewed communications of the Divine Spirit. As we drink that cup, the Son of man gives us of that life which He has in Himself. Oh for hearts ever open to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit!

MAY 29.

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."—1 PETER ii. 13.

LET not any man think more highly of himself than he ought, but think soberly. It is not in theory this can be obeyed. It is not by prayer, or reading, or the exercise of religious duties, that a man's spirit can be proved that he is really thinking soberly. It is by obedience and reverence for ordinances appointed for his guidance and help, whether in the family, the state, or the church. It is when a man seeks the protection and nourishing of those whom God has set to shield His people, that proof is given that the man is humble and not high-minded. When a man yields submission to those who are set over him, he is recognising the dependence of the creature on God. By such submission he is also making true confession of the dignity of that place in the family, the state, or the church which has been vouchsafed to him. The child honours his standing as a child in the family when he submits to his parents. So also members of the state or the church honour their standing as they submit to those set over them in the Lord. When a man withdraws himself from that submission he can have no holy responsibility of his place, no true regard of his own dignity.

MAY 30.

"*Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God.*"
—1 PETER iii. 22.

ON the day when "He led them out as far as Bethany," He whom we follow leaves the earth, and ascends to the throne of God. We remain on the earth; He has passed through His present trials; He rests in glory at the Father's right hand. We abide here in the midst of struggle and conflict, waiting to enter into His rest. In faith we see Him depart, carried up into heaven, and our souls are animated within us to follow Him thither. His ascension is not for Himself, but for His people. He goes to send down upon us the quickening Spirit. He has left the earth; for the Holy One could not tarry on it so long as Satan has his grasp on it. But He has left it that He may come again as its deliverer, to cast out Satan and reign in glory over the redeemed creation. Full of this faith, we have great joy. Because He has ascended, who is Head over all, *to His Church*, we shall be found in the midst thereof praising and blessing God. *There* do we partake of the Holy Ghost sent down by the Risen Saviour to animate His Body. *There* do we receive continued supplies of His life and sympathy. *There* is revived and cherished the glorious hope that He is coming forth again to bless, just as we have seen Him depart in the act of blessing.

MAY 31.

"*Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind.*"—ACTS ii. 2.

WE thank God for the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. What avail would be all the love of the Father, and the work of the Son, if the Holy Ghost be not with us to reveal them unto us? And He has come. Hallelujah! He is with us, and in us. The Risen Saviour had breathed upon the eleven disciples, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, and now that which He had breathed comes as the mighty rushing wind. The Holy Ghost is made manifest; He has come upon the apostles, and, of necessity, upon all who had faith to company with them. He reveals to them in such a way the wondrous work of the Lamb of God, that they declare it to the understanding of every tongue and nation. Many dwellers in other lands had come to this feast at Jerusalem, and to them came the word of salvation. Is not this prophetic of the work given to us? The Holy Ghost has been granted to us, that, through Him, we may declare glad tidings to all men. Men of every tribe must be brought to the knowledge of God's will, and they alone who are filled with the Holy Ghost can declare His will unto those who are afar off. Quench ye not the Spirit, neither hinder ye any longer His manifestations.

JUNE 1.

"*Be not conformed to this world.*"—ROM. xii. 2.

WE are surrounded by gross darkness; we are embosomed, as it were, in the midst of all the evil that is working in the world; we are exposed to all the obnoxious vapours that rise from the bottomless pit. Such is our spiritual locality here. It is even the situation of those who are clothed upon with the garments of salvation, and made partakers of God's holy ordinances. Now, are we keeping our garments clean? Are we passing through the evils, and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world? Are we breathing forth the air of our heavenly calling? or are we tainted with the noxious corruption of judgment, murmuring, rebellion, and every evil now at work? Three young men walked in a fiery furnace unscathed, the very smell of fire unknown. One like unto the Son of man was with them. We are cast into very evil times, but we have put on the Lord Jesus, and therefore are we able to watch, and keep our garments pure from defilement. It is only as we maintain our fellowship with Jesus, and are conformed to His image, that we can obey the injunction, "Be not conformed to this world."

JUNE 2.

"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep."—1 THESS. iv. 13.

THE apostle would comfort the Thessalonian mourners. He does so by pointing them forward to the second coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the true ground of comfort to the sorrowful. The apostle speaks of the "dead in Christ" as "them which are asleep." Called to sleep in Christ's everlasting arms: why mourn for them? Have they not entered into their rest? Yea, verily. The grief of the Thessalonian mourners issued from no fountain of doubt regarding this, neither did it arise from any want of acquiescence in the all-wise providential procedure of God. "Thy will be done," was the expression of their spirits. Whence the danger then, and the false ground of the sorrow wherewith they followed to the grave those whom they had loved so well? It was the result of misapprehension. They were yet ignorant that the Hope of the living and the dead is one,—even the Hope set before the whole communion of saints, of being with Jesus when He cometh in glory. They thought that their departed Christian friends would not share the glory which the Lord would bring with Him when He came again. They imagined this glory would be bestowed on those believers only who should be "alive and remain" at the moment of the Lord's appearing. Blessed be God that He has not left us in ignorance "concerning them which are asleep!"

JUNE 3.

"*If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.*"—1 THESS. iv. 14.

THE apostle seeks to soothe the sorrow of his mourning children by removing their misapprehension. Could he only get them to recognise the relation of the resurrection of Christ to that of His people, joy would fill their hearts. The one thought to which he endeavoured to engage their minds is expressed in the text of this day. The second coming of our Lord must therefore be the signal for the resurrection of the sleeping dust of the believer; and what shall be the order of the procession of events on that great day? The apostle tells us: "The dead in Christ shall rise first." Then believers living on the earth shall be instantaneously transformed from mortal to immortal, from corruptible to incorruptible. Then the risen dead and the transformed living shall be caught up together into the air to meet their descending King, and so shall they ever be with the Lord.

Sorrowful, bereaved followers of the Lamb! mourn not for the departed loved one as those who have no hope. An ancient heathen writer says, "Suns may set and rise, but when once our short light has set, the night is one everlasting sleep." O Christian! ye are not thus ignorant concerning them which are asleep. The Lord has risen. The dead in Christ shall rise first. The day of the Lord is at hand. Behold, your redemption draweth nigh!

JUNE 4.

"*He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father.*"—ACTS i. 4.

JESUS had ascended. The disciples are waiting for the promise of the Father. They had heard of it from Jesus. It was a promise which, when fulfilled, would completely change their condition. It was the earnest of the kingdom. The beginning of the kingdom of God within them. Now what these ten days of waiting were to the first disciples, so should our whole life be,—waiting for the promise of the Father,—waiting for the full and ultimate development of the Holy Ghost in the Body of Christ, at the second appearing of Jesus. We are to prepare during our pilgrimage for "that day," just as the disciples prepared during these ten days for the descent of the Holy Ghost, by being continually in the temple and waiting at Jerusalem. Looking at the action of the disciples in this light, we would combine the twofold promise exhibited to them at the ascension. 1. The descent of the Spirit; and 2. The return again of the Son. Let us learn to mourn before God that we have resisted and grieved the Holy Ghost, given to prepare us for the return of the Lord. Let us rejoice that the Holy Ghost is with us still, and will yet work mightily to accomplish God's purpose in us. Let us watch and pray, and be sober, for surely the Spirit testifies "that the end of all things is at hand."

JUNE 5.

"*Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.*"—JOEL i. 15.

THIS is a solemn chapter. Read it with prayer, that God would open your eyes to see its meaning. It brings before us the waste and desolation which have come upon the Christian Church—the Lord's vineyard. Open your eyes and behold how evils multiply and abound throughout Christendom. The Church is riven asunder, and Christian brethren bite and devour one another; instead of a garden bringing forth in all fulness the fruits of the Spirit, we have the rank and noisome weeds of hatred, emulation, and strife. Ah! we have set ourselves in opposition to the Spirit of the Lord, who was sent by the Risen Saviour to water and refreshen the garden of the Lord with the dews of *His* influences. But we resisted and grieved the Holy Ghost, and desolation hath come upon us. The beautiful garden is laid waste. Because of this, because that which God planted had withered away and been eaten up, the prophet is made to warn men of the terribleness of the day of the Lord. His word stretches afar; he prophesies of the time of the end, of the latter days, of the latter times of the Christian Church. And now are we called to mourn, weep, lament, because of all these heresies and evils that have quenched the Holy Ghost, and withered the plants of the Lord. For these things the day of the Lord comes quickly, the judgment of the Almighty tarries not. Let us be warned and repent.

JUNE 6.

"*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.*"—1 PET. v. 6.

BEFORE honour is humility. God is not seeking us to be humble in order to keep us low: it is in order to exalt us. Our home is in the heavens, and the Lord would prepare us to enter it, by bringing us to the exercise of a broken and contrite spirit. We learn this not merely by devout faith and meditation, but also by our solemn act of celebrating the holy communion, and by the grace received therein. There we celebrate that wondrous sacrifice made in subjection unto the will of God. There we celebrate that purest act of humility. There we shew forth the reality of our sinful estate, of our creature nothingness. Thus we acknowledge the only door, the gate through which we can be exalted and enter into the kingdom There we adore the solemn dealing of the Almighty, under which the Son of God was "pressed sore," even unto death. We feel as if all our efforts after humility were failures save as we be joined with the Lowly One. And so joined, behold what follows! We are made partakers of His risen life—of His exalted glory. Be ye lowly in your own eyes, and ye shall be lifted up in God's eyes.

JUNE 7.

"With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."—ACTS iv. 33.

THE witness of the resurrection of the Lord is connected, in this chapter, with the total alienation from the influence of earthly things. "Neither said any of them that ought of the things he possessed was his own;" "as many as were possessors sold them—laid them at the apostle's feet." Barnabas "having land, sold it." They were led to a state of mind completely above this world. We learn from this a blessed teaching and searching as to what extent our faith in the resurrection of the Lord goes. It is said we are raised up with Him. Of His resurrection-life we have partaken; and its peculiar feature is an act of leaving the corruption of the world. The world and its things bow down the man, as much as the clods of the earth press down the body. As risen with Christ, we throw off that which presses down the body—that which has an undue influence over the affections. By this power we are able to deny ourselves, and live as strangers in the earth. The things of this world are merely servants in our hands to minister to the Lord. Having been raised above them, let us not again fall under their power.

JUNE 8.

"*The children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or, would God we had died in the wilderness!*"—NUM. xiv. 2.

ALL the while the cloud rested upon the camp, Israel had ocular proof that Jehovah was present with them. More than that, during all this time they were fed by bread from heaven itself. Surely that might be enough to satisfy a people. For God is the portion of His people. But the delay proved that the human heart, even when under the presence of God, is proud and rebellious, and ready to complain the moment the leading of Providence seems to thwart it. Let us look in like manner on the Christian Church. Desolate though she be in the wilderness, she has ocular proof that God has not utterly forsaken or forgotten her. Above all, we have the abiding presence of the Lord through the true manna communicated in the bread and wine. To whom is this given? Oh, to those who are not worthy even to live before God, much less to be made partakers of the Divine nature. Surely that is enough in the present day of darkness and calamity to keep us from complaining. God's work in us is to take proof of us whether *Himself* alone be the desire of our hearts. Whether it be indeed true that we long for the enjoyment of the eternal rest in the heavenly Canaan. For then shall we be satisfied with that "manna" that cometh down to us. We shall rest in God, and wait patiently for Him.

JUNE 9.

"She said, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."—MATT. xv. 27.

LET us meditate the record of the woman of Canaan. If a pagan woman is held out to us as such an example of faith and prayer, how much must be required of the members of Christ's Church. Her encouragement arose only from faith in His love. She had staked all her affections upon this, and had made up her mind that her answer must be granted. Nothing discouraged her. Yea, as an old divine says, "She worshipped His refusals and apparent harshness." She valued Him the more, as He seemed jealous of showing forth His glory. And the disciples, not understanding Him, joined against the woman, and would send her away. But the more she was refused, the more she bowed and worshipped. She prevailed.

Have we made up our minds, that as there was no one save Jesus who could deliver the child, so there is no one in heaven and earth but Jesus who can deliver us in our desolation and grievous vexation? Are our prayers of that importunate cast that will take no refusals, and go on asking all the more earnestly? Are our eyes fixed upon *Him alone* as our Helper? Then let us look at this woman. Upon Him alone her eye and heart rested —not on any of the disciples. Let us so take up the spirit of prayer, that we may ever be found waiting for *the Lord* to send help out of Zion—even His own appearing.

JUNE 10.

"*Lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.*"—1 COR. i. 17.

THERE is a danger of looking at the cross, and not looking for the glory through the cross. We are called upon to have the cross in our heart, to hold it there and look forward to the glory. The true use to make of the sacrifice of Christ is to be conformed thereto in our hearts, in order to attain to the glory at the coming of the Lord. It is quite possible to treat the sufferings and death of Christ in such a way that they may fail of their purpose in preparing us for a holy submission to His will. How many now bend the knee to the Lord, who neither obey Him now in the day of His absence, nor desire to see Him revealed in His glory to rule over all. Oh, let us lift up our hearts in thankfulness unto God, because Christ died for sin! But let us do more; let us regard the sacrifice of Christ as the ground of our earnest desire, faith and hope, that God will send forth His Son the second time, to answer our prayers, and reveal His glory before all. Especially let us pray that we be stirred up to this longing desire, as we look upon and receive the sacred emblems in the Holy Communion, remembering that we therein "show forth His death till He come."

JUNE 11.

"*And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it.*"—LUKE xxii. 19.

LET our meditation, this morning, be turned upon the grace of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in instituting the Holy Communion. It was on a most memorable occasion that God appointed and set forth the order of the Passover. It was on that night when He destroyed the first-born. On as memorable an occasion did He develop the grace of the Christian Passover, even the Holy Supper. It was on the night when the First-born was given up into the hands of man to be crucified and slain. It was in a very dark hour of Israel's history that the Passover was ordained; but it was on the verge of their deliverance. It was in a very dark hour of our Saviour's history that the Holy Supper was made known; but it was on the verge of His deliv erance. It told of sorrow and of death; but it told also of resurrection. It told of the condemnation of the old man; but it told also of the resurrection of the new man. It told of times of bitterness to the Church; but it told also of joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Furthermore, let us consider the act of love set forth in this Holy Sacrament. What blessing for cursing! What coals of fire on the heads of His enemies! Oh! how can we partake of His grace, save as we are growing in the spirit of forgiveness, mercy, and forbearance?

JUNE 12.

"*Ye do show the Lord's death till He come.*"—1 COR. xi. 26.

MANY are the signs of the appearing of the Lord being nigh at hand. And the warning is, lest that day overtake us as a thief. Those are in great danger who believe the doctrine merely, who hold it simply as an article in their creed, but who go not out to meet Him, and who fail to lay hold of Him now as present in His ordinances. When the Jews asked a sign, He said, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood has eternal life." The memorial of this, Jesus has given us. But what more despised? What more slighted, even under the profession of reverence, than the Holy Communion? What more set aside and made to give way to the reasonings of men? If we regard it as a bare sign, then do we fail to lay hold of Christ's very presence in this holy ordinance. The more completely we realise that Christ is indeed present in the Holy Communion, the more are we filled with desire for His appearing, that He may be ever with us in person. Then do we see how the "showing forth His death" is connected with His coming again. By this sacrament we are being proved and tested as to the reality of our desire for Him. Before we can enter upon the glory of the Advent, we are first proved whether we enjoy Him through earthly elements.

JUNE 13.

"Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you."
—GAL. iii. 1.

IN the Holy Communion we have Jesus Christ evidently set forth crucified among us. How does the presence of the sacred emblems on the Lord's Table search and humble us! Let us put away all boasting and high-mindedness; for who broke that Body—who shed that Blood? Who led that Holy One to the tree, and there nailed and pierced Him? Who wagged the head and mocked Him? What shall we answer? We must hide ourselves in the dust and cry out, "Unclean, unclean!" The result of all we ever do, of all our self-will, of all our pride and naughtiness of heart, is before the eye of faith, as we look upon the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper. We are forbidden all boasting, because, as we lift up our eyes, we behold the emblems of our Saviour's passion, and we remember how vile we are. But while these emblems are before us for humiliation, they are also for our confidence before God. We behold in them the triumph of grace, of that love which surmounteth the multitude of sin, and draws nigh to help us with His very presence. They speak to us of God's acceptance, on our behalf, of Christ's all-sufficient sacrifice.

JUNE 14.

"*A little while, and ye shall see Me.*"—JOHN xvi. 19.

THE word which Jesus said, "A little while, and ye shall see Me," is still true. He spake as one who was grasping the complete purpose of ages. And, as compared with them, the intervening years between the departure and return were indeed "a little while." And as we lay hold of His purpose, the time of His coming again will be to us ever as "a little while," and we shall see Him again. Yet He spake as a man to His fellow-men. He spake to soothe them under their sorrow, and He meant that His absence should be known to them only as "a little while." As we, by the Holy Ghost, keep fellowship with Him, the same thought possesses our spirits, and gives us energy and courage to wait. We remember what He did on that evening when He spake these words. More and more must we connect *all His last discourse* with the grand act of the evening, the act wherein He showed forth His death. As *we* keep this feast, we continue in communion with Him, and all earthly things disappear from our sight, and His presence is laid hold of, as all in all. Then His presence, eye to eye, is longed for. Our nearness to Him, and His nearness to us, carry us forward in joyful anticipation of the speedy close of the "little while."

JUNE 15.

"The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me."—JOHN xv. 26.

IT is very important to bear in mind that the Holy Ghost is present with us in order to bear witness, not to Himself, but to Jesus. St John says of Jesus, that He "was the true Light, which lighteth every man." He says, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world." We worship Him, then, as the Light, and it is of Him that the Holy Ghost testifies, and Him the Spirit is ever revealing. The Holy Ghost is not present with us to reveal *Himself* as the Light of the Church. He is present, being Himself co-equal with "the Light," to reveal unto fallen humanity *the blessed Jesus*, who is "the Light" of His people. Let us rejoice before the Lord that He hath sent the Holy Ghost to testify of Jesus, that we may know Him as "the Light," and that "the Light" may be so present with us as to make us mirrors to reflect His character and wisdom; yea, that we may ever appear before God and man as burning and shining lights.

Whatever be our perplexity or our darkness, we have in the presence of the Holy Ghost, who is compared unto the Lamp of fire, a sure and certain pledge that we shall be blessed with light and direction on our path. It is they whose wills are crucified and brought into the subjection of God who shall know Jesus as indeed "the Light."

JUNE 16.

"*He went aside privately into a desert place . . . . and the people, when they knew it, followed Him.*"—LUKE ix. 10, 11.

THE word of preaching by Jesus seems to have had an immense power over the multitudes. Regardless of consequences, they follow Him to the wilderness out of desire to hear Him. May we not say that God was working in their hearts?—that though many may not afterwards have followed Him, yet they did follow Him on this occasion under the guidance of God's love? But, without meditating further on this point, there seems conveyed to us a very salutary lesson in the fact. It is this: They who would follow the Lord, and fulfil His purpose in the present wilderness condition of the Church, must do it out of very love to be with Him, regardless of consequences. Not doubting that, as He took compassion upon the people and fed them, so will He have compassion on those who follow Him now, and not suffer them to lack any good thing. Is there not now-a-days a great deal too much calculation as to what advantage will be gained by following the Lord? Shall I profit by it, or lose by it? Seduced by the refinement and luxuries of this life, we are not very willing to follow the Lord into the realities of the heavenly calling. Let us cast ourselves entirely upon His providence and faithfulness. Let us not seek to make a bargain, as it were, with God, and thus stay His help and power.

JUNE 17.

"*God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*"
—JAMES iv. 6.

JESUS humbled Himself unto death—therefore God exalted Him in the power of the Resurrection. Man in the pride of his heart exalteth himself—and therefore, terrible and mighty as he often is, he is laid low. In proportion as we humble our spirit, shall we know the power of Christ's life within us. It is only from a condition of great lowliness that we can be raised up in Jesus Christ. Wherever there is confidence in self, or in what surrounds us, there must be a corresponding lack of confidence in the blessed sacrifice of the Lord. When we grow in a spirit of contrition we discern the glorious truth contained in that sacrifice. Such is the spirit in which we are likewise to approach the Holy Communion. It is a blessed mystery, not to be laid hold of, and explained by the intellect. The pride of intellect must be humbled before it. The lowly spirit of faith sees its reality, and feeds upon it to its nourishment and growth in grace. To the proud it is but as an empty vessel; to the humble and contrite spirit it is a vessel full of richest wine.

JUNE 18.

"*We are members of His body.*"—EPH. v. 30.

LET us meditate this morning on the holy reverence and duty which we owe to our brethren, to all the members of Christ's Body, which is the Church. We honour the presence of Christ in all the ordinances of worship—especially in the Sacrament of the Supper. Shall we fail to honour that presence in each other? for He dwelleth in the members of His Body. Can we say all that is lovely of the Lord, and open the mouth of evil upon Him in His members? Can we behold and adore the amazing charity shown forth in His passion, and indulge a spirit of judgment upon His members? Can we love the fellowship of His presence in the Sacrament, and count light by the fellowship of His presence in His members? Can we adorn with the richest gifts the place where His honour dwelleth, and fail to supply the needs of those whom He counteth as Himself? (Matt. xxv.) Can we delight in acts of outward homage to Him, and trespass or neglect the laws of courtesy to His members? The more we see of the grace of the Divine Presence in the ordinances of the Church, the more, by the Holy Ghost, must we see the Divine Presence in those whom Christ hath united to Himself, and the more shall we be stirred up to the duties of obedience, kindness, courtesy, and forbearance.

JUNE 19.

"*The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*"—PHIL. iv. 7.

ALL around, we find disquietude, bustle, perplexity. In God we find perfect quietude, stillness, peace. All around, men are grasping after some object of hope which, when attained, leaves the heart as empty as ever. In God we find all our desire, and are satisfied. We have found Him who is our portion and inheritance, and the ultimate object of hope. We are at rest, save as we wait for the revelation of the Lord eye to eye. And when we go abroad among men, how this peace and quiet follow us! Amidst the ambitious and restless spirit of this life we are kept in separation from it; for it has no attraction for one whose heart has been preoccupied with God. The troubles and vexations which annoy all men more or less, disturb not that heart which has met with the Lord; for all things are seen working together for good. However great our sorrows may be, the heart realises that the Deliverer comes to grant us deliverance from them all. Oh, how His presence soothes and calms the spirit! Truly it is like oil upon the troubled waters. Amidst the raging seas we rest in peace!

JUNE 20.

"Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens."
—Ps. lxxxix. 2.

It is full of comfort to meditate upon the beautiful order and regularity of nature, as conveying assurance of God's covenant with His people. The sun, the moon, and the stars are so regular in their course. The tides ebb and flow to a moment. The seasons return with beautiful certainty. All nature is obedient. Nature is like a child in the hands of God. It is comforting to look at all this as illustrative of what man shall yet be, even as a docile instrument in the hand of the Lord. It is comforting also to look at all this, as a token that the loving-kindness of the Lord departeth not from His people. Though Satan has usurped the dominion of nature, and is the prince of the power of the air, yet God has not on that account forsaken nature and given it up to confusion. The Redeemer of "the whole creation" stands before Him. So, notwithstanding all the confusion which sin and the rejection of God's grace have wrought amongst us, He yet maintains His purpose to save and deliver us. He could as soon forget this as allow the sun, moon, and stars to cease their course in the heavens. Therefore let us take courage amidst all our ills; let us look upon all the regularity of nature, and see therein the assurance that God will not forsake us, but will accomplish all that He hath spoken regarding His people.

JUNE 21.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son."
—JOHN iii. 16.

EVERY good gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights. Jesus is the great Gift of God unto the world. He "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." And though Jesus came out of His own love and will, yet His glorious place of subjection leads Him ever to present Himself unto us as sent of God. It is edifying, while we adore the Lord Jesus as the Lamb slain, ever to bear in our spirits His special characteristic as "the Gift of God" present with us, not as an accident or custom, but with us day by day, as emanating direct from the mercy of the eternal Father. For it behoves us to be like Jesus, who is our Life, and to honour the Father even as He doth. We are to give God all the glory, and realise His gift as sent for the eternal purposes of Him with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning. In this spirit we are led to give glory to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Father gives the Son, the Son is one in will with the Father, and the Holy Ghost reveals to us the Son as "the Gift of God." O my soul, bless God for this His unspeakable Gift, and give thyself evermore unto God, that He may use thee for His glory!

JUNE 22.

"*Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God. . . . . He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.*"—1 JOHN iv. 7, 8.

LET us maintain this spirit, ever rejoicing before God, and drinking deep into that love wherewith He hath loved us. Full of His love, let us pour it out upon the brethren. Let us be no more than channels through whom God's love may flow. Surrounded as we are by an atmosphere of evil, and accustomed as we are to accents of judging and unkindness, it is wonderful how apt Christian love is to become withered. Evil communications corrupt those good manners, that courteousness of bearing, thought, speech, which *must* mark the character of the man who dwells in God. We must avoid the evils around us, we must listen to no excuse or apology for not *loving* all the brethren as God hath loved us. How can we do so unless we dwell in God? Love is not a sentiment, or a feeling, or an occasional exuberance. It is as our life is, constant, unceasing. Prosperity does not make our life the more, adversity does not make it the less. It is the breath of the Almighty. So is Love. It is Life. It is our spiritual being. It is dwelling in God, and God in us. Wherever we are met, men should meet those who are an expression of that word, "God is Love."

JUNE 23.

"*They all with one consent began to make excuse.*"—LUKE xiv. 18.

THE spirit which manifested itself on occasion of the invitation to the supper is expressive of the condition of men's minds at the present day. The importance and position which earthly things have assumed, act as a complete barrier in the way of receiving the Word of the Lord and entering upon His work. The places which have been assigned unto men are used as reasons why they should not do God's will. Instead of being ready at God's disposal when He calls, men have placed themselves in the way, and said, "These things are our own, not Thine, and therefore we cannot leave them for Thee and Thy service." They are idols, not servants, in the hands of man. To what extent is such a feeling prevailing in our hearts? Let us meditate on the great blessing which arises to those who, yielding themselves unto God, are able to lay all worldly duties, things, and places at His feet, and find them most useful to His glory and service. The heart rightly exercised sees no obstacle in the way. Surely He will grant grace to all who come at His bidding, and serve Him with all they are and possess.

JUNE 24.

"*Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*"—2 KINGS ii. 11.

THERE is something very striking in the history of Elijah as regards its abruptness. How suddenly he appears to Israel! "Elijah the Tishbite said to Ahab." How suddenly he comes with his message from time to time! And how suddenly he departs! "And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven." In like manner our Lord was most suddenly announced to Mary. And how many events of His life took place suddenly and unexpectedly—especially after His resurrection! And, above all, how suddenly He was parted from His disciples and carried up into heaven! The same feature of suddenness will characterise His return in glory from heaven. In a moment—in an unexpected moment—when men look not for Him—will He come! This solemn truth should stir up our hope, and keep us waiting in expectation of the moment when we "shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." For this end are we sustained with the life of Him who hath ascended. Let our days, while we are on earth, be spent in speaking peace and in blessing all men, just as *He* lifted up His hands to bless before He departed.

JUNE 25.

"*The disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.*"
—ACTS xiii. 52.

CHRIST is present in all the means of grace, in all the ordinances of the sanctuary. To what extent are we entering into the grace of this presence? It is indeed a searching question. If we are really enjoying and entering into our Lord's presence in His ordinances, then we must be longing to be filled with the Holy Ghost. This is the especial gift of the Son to the Church during His absence —given not merely as a gift, but as the only gift by which we can either discern the Son or manifest His life. It is quite possible to be speaking about feeding on Christ, while our hearts are shrinking from the quickening energy of the Holy Ghost. Yea, we may not long to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Let us lay this to heart. The life of Christ can only be developed within us by the active operation of the Holy Ghost, showing us Christ's presence and power in His Atonement, and in all means of grace. Our being brought near to Christ in these, must lead us to drink deeper and deeper into the powers and gifts of the Holy Ghost, and to take a firmer and clearer stand against the works of the devil, the world, and the flesh.

JUNE 26.

"Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus."—ROM. xv. 5.

WE are called upon to follow the example of the Lord's great humility. He humbled Himself, and became obedient even to the death—the shameful death of the cross. He gave His back to the smiters, and the cheeks to them that plucked out the hair. Verily, if we are called upon to be His witnesses in this generation, we must be deeply rooted in humility. The more we lay hold of our calling of God to fulfil His purpose, the more must we be ready to endure the scorn and contempt of the gainsaying world. If we meet this scorn with impatience, if we are offended, then there is the sign of a proud and unhumbled spirit. But if we endure it, growing in love and tenderness to the sons of men, if we endure it as those who are entering into the unity of the sin that hath crucified Jesus, then there is a sign of that broken and contrite heart which He exhibited in His final trial, yea, in all His life. How humble, indeed, was He who, while bearing the burdens of all men, was treated as one who was rather their enemy. Let us draw near and adore the Lord for His lowliness in giving His back to the smiters. Let us get hold of that deep humility of heart, which submitted to be smitten by those whose burdens and sorrows He was bearing.

JUNE 27.

"How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?"
—MARK ii. 16.

JESUS was clothed with humility. He eats and drinks with publicans and sinners. It gives great offence that He should receive and countenance those whom the wise and great had agreed to discountenance. They esteemed not publicans and sinners as sharing the same covenant, nor did they dream that their evil was but the expression of the real estate of all. But behold Jesus descends to men of low estate! He bears witness to the unity of humanity in its fallen condition. Now, what marks more painfully the state of the Church in these days, than the refusal to eat and drink with one another in the Holy Supper, because of the judgment which is pronounced by the one upon the other. Surely they who would take up the Spirit of the Lord, must make up their minds, and count it their privilege, to keep in fellowship with the whole Christian Church in its divided state. Let us receive all, as God has received us. If our hearts be duly exercised, we shall wonder more at God's act in receiving us, than at our act in receiving others. If we believe that by grace only we are received as miserable sinners, then will we gladly receive all the members of the Catholic Church.

JUNE 28.

"*He shall be a priest upon His throne.*"—ZECH. vi. 13.

WHILE the Lord Jesus reigns as King, He exercises the holy function of the Priest—the "Great High Priest of our profession." There is here a wondrous combination of two of the mediatorial offices of our Lord. But there is more; there is a proclamation of the perpetuity of His priesthood. It is His function, as a "priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," to make "continual intercession for us." Under the Levitical dispensation, the priest was appointed to offer sacrifice, and to pray for the people. The type was fulfilled in the Great Antitype. "He gave Himself for us." He completed His sacrificial work on Calvary. His death there, was a perfect oblation, to which, as such, nothing could be added. He is now within the veil, "a priest upon His throne," presenting His sacrifice, and making intercession for us. Our Great High Priest, having died once for all, carried with Him into heaven the finished Atonement which He had accomplished on Calvary, and, presenting it before Jehovah, stands forth as our acknowledged Mediator and Advocate with the everlasting Father. Oh, wondrous love! To "bleed and die!" To "bear the cross and shame!" Hark! a voice laden with mercy speaks: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins."

JUNE 29.

"*He shall be a priest upon His throne.*"—ZECH. vi. 13.

"No cross—no crown!" Such is the order of experience. Jesus endured the cross, and now He wears the crown. It was prophesied of Him, "He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head." He who, as the Lowly One, offered up Himself on the cross as a sacrifice, sits in regal power as "a priest upon His throne." What then? "The rhetoric of a child is great." It is the Eternal Son who pleadeth. Solomon is called Jedidiah, that is, beloved of the Lord: and one proof of the favour with which God regarded him, was the permission given him to ask what he would. To the Son the Father saith, "Ask and I will give Thee." It is the *obedient* Son who pleadeth. His prayer, John xvii., rests on the basis of His obedience. If, as a Son, His pleading is resistless, what shall be the potency of His prayer as the *obedient* Son? He sits a priest on His throne, and what plea so powerful as the merits of His own blood? There is no cry more potent than the cry of blood. It brought down the Lord from heaven to challenge and to punish Cain. It imprecated appalling vengeance on the Jews. Oh! what shall be the power of the blood of Christ to secure for us every blessing?

Think of the "Father I will" of your Royal Priest, O child of God, and are you not impelled to take up the bold challenge of the apostle, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth," &c.

JUNE 30.

"*And they all forsook Him and fled.*"—MARK xiv. 50.

THE disciples were strong in their assurance that they would never leave the Lord. Wherein lay their weakness? They lacked that spirit of dependence which prevented them casting their all upon the Lord for help. They had long followed Him from hope of advancement and patronage. Their honour was at stake as regarded Him. They could not now leave Him; for, in the eyes of the world, it would disgrace them. In thinking to cleave to Him, they thought, it may be, to patronise Him, and be, perhaps, afterwards patronised of Him. Such feeling betokened the condition of their hearts. And is there nought of the same spirit in this day? If we would follow the Lord through all trials until He come again, it must be in the spirit of contrition and helplessness—in the spirit of adoration—in the spirit that knows its own deceitfulness, and casts itself wholly upon the mercy of the Lord. We cannot cleave to His purpose if we would presume to *patronise* it, or be *patronised* of it. We shall cleave to it, and to the Lord in it, only as we renounce all selfish objects, and place ourselves in His hands, that He alone may be honoured and exalted, and that we may be guided and sustained just as appears good to Him.

JULY 1.

"*The wicked will not behold the majesty of the Lord.*"—ISA. xxvi. 10. "*Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.*"—MATT. xxvi. 24.

THE word of the Lord in Isaiah is strikingly exemplified in the case of Judas. Judas received the bread and wine at the institution of the Supper. But he discerned not the glory and majesty of Him whom it symbolised. The effect, therefore, was great energy upon him to hasten his own destruction. He did eat and drink judgment and condemnation upon himself. Are our spirits in such discernment that we can behold the majesty of the Lord? Are we humble enough to receive in the sacred symbols the very presence of the Eternal Life? Are we ready to acknowledge that the majesty of the Lord shines forth gloriously in that holy service, whereby we show forth His act of giving His life for the sheep? In order to answer these questions, it is very needful that the heart should be under a holy consciousness of the depth of evil which appertains to humanity. Not until we are fully alive to the awful hole of the pit out of which Jesus lifts us, can we discern the majesty of the Lord—the majesty of His sacrifice, and of all His doings in our midst even unto this day.

JULY 2.

"*Therefore be ye also ready.*"—MATT. xxiv. 44.

WE are warned that terrible things are coming on the earth in the last days. But there is a promise of deliverance to those who shall be "accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Now it is said of those who have gone before, that by *faith* they obtained the promises. And will it not be by *a struggle of faith* that we shall obtain the fulfilment of the promise of translation, in that day when the dead shall be raised, and the living changed, and all together shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air? For verily in this way is deliverance from the darkening calamities to be brought unto the faithful. Is such a promise then made to the indolent and self-pleasing? Is it not addressed to a condition of spirit implying self-discipline, and emancipation from the bondage of self-will? Verily we cannot attain to the realisation of this promise, except as we cease from all confidence in ourselves—in our own standing—and submit entirely to the will of Christ. O Lord, help us to examine ourselves whether we be so doing!

JULY 3.

"*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth.*"—REV. iii. 10.

LET us meditate again, this morning, respecting the condition of spirit required in those who shall be accounted worthy to escape the judgments coming on the world. The Lord, in the epistle to the Church of Philadelphia, describes prophetically the state of His Church in the last days, immediately preceding the taking away of the first-fruits, that they be not involved in the judgment and terrible trial of those who shall be left on the earth, after the translation of those who are ready. He shows, too, that those who look for deliverance must learn to keep their spirits free from all haste and impatience amid present trials. We must manifest patience under the dealings of men; patience under the dispensations of Providence; patience under the hiding of our Father's countenance; patience amid the divisions of the brethren. And how can we learn this spirit but by following the Lord? He alone possessed such a pure spirit. Let us draw near to Him, and have fellowship with Him in this spirit, that we may be "kept from the hour of temptation."

JULY 4.

"There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not."—REV. xii. 7, 8.

WHATEVER be the exact and proper reference of these mysterious words, it is well to remember that our calling is even now to fight against the dragon —that is, the devil—and against his angels. They who enter into the work of the Lord—the Lord living in man—must know of such a conflict. As we take up the terribleness of the work of the Lord, and yield our whole being unto it, we shall not only realise this great fight and struggle, but we shall realise the daily victory, for the dragon and his angels "prevailed not." We shall know what it is to have Satan cast out of us, and not allowed to rest within us.

What a title is given him when this war in heaven is spoken of—"*The accuser of the brethren.*" And herein lies the secret of his victory over us at any time, or of our victory over him. When we walk in uncharitableness towards the brethren, he prevails in us. When we walk in charity towards all, we prevail over him. Let us not be "accusers of the brethren." Yea, let us cast ourselves at the foot of the altar as they who give up their lives for the brethren, and who do live to intercede for the brethren.

JULY 5.

"*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*"—TITUS ii. 13.

THE Church for many generations let slip, from the memory and affections, the hope of the second coming of the Lord. We thank God that in these days, there has been such a revival of this hope in the hearts of many throughout the different branches of the Christian Church. May we not look upon this as a token that the Lord is nigh at hand, even at the door, and that He is turning in mercy towards us, not resenting our past unfaithfulness and forgetfulness? Now the effect of this hope must not be simply to bring comfort to the heart. It must purify, it must cleanse all our ways. It must change our habits. It must alter our mode of life. It must produce that effect upon all our arrangements, that it may be seen that the hope of His appearing is no mere sentiment or doctrine, but an object of immediate expectation. It is possible to hold the doctrine as a point of theology, without any increasing desire for the Lord's coming, or any hearty preparation for it. The Apostle John brings out the effect of this hope, when it stirs the *heart* as well as the *intellect*. "Every man that hath this hope in Him"—the hope of His appearing and of our being made like Him—"purifieth himself."

JULY 6.

"*Thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before Me to offer burnt-offerings.*"—JER. xxxiii. 17, 18.

OH how refreshing is it to the spirit to meditate on those sayings of the Lord, where He triumphs in His love and purpose with His chosen people! Dwelling as we do amidst scenes of desolation, of woe, and of human failing, how readily the heart sinks into complaining and hopelessness. Hence the need-be of continually falling back upon the character and faithfulness of God. Taking our refuge there, abiding in Him and partaking of His love, we are enabled to triumph amidst what to the human eye is defeat and overthrow. Hear, this morning, the Word of the Lord by Jeremiah, hear how the Lord confirms His Word by appealing, in the following verses, to the steadfastness and regularity of the day and the night. And shall we not be comforted? Not only because we shall ever behold the ordinances of God, and the means of grace maintained in the earth till Shiloh come again; but because we shall speedily see the reality of the Lord's word and promise, in beholding the throne of the house of David set; yea, the throne of the Great King, with all those attendant ministries which surround His glory.

JULY 7.

"*He looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.*"—EXOD. iii. 2.

WHAT a glorious and blessed sight was this which appeared unto Moses! The groanings of the children of Israel during many years of bondage are answered. God is brought down from heaven by the supplications of His people! My soul, wonder thou, and adore, and see how He comes to a lowly bush! And so tender is He, that while His presence causes it to burn, it is not consumed. The bush is able to receive the Holy One of Israel. Behold the glory of God! He can meet and dwell with man. He vindicates His own purity, and yet man lives before Him. He says to Moses, "Say *I am* hath sent me unto you." Here we have the mystery of the presence of God with man. This noble work of God our fathers have told us. Yet, behold, we have the very work now. In answer to the cries and supplications of many generations, we have brought down unto us, not a new incarnation; but, by the Holy Ghost, the very presence of the "*I am*" in the midst of us. Lo! the God-man is amongst us. We have now His presence really, though not yet fully. He condescends now, in a certain measure, to dwell with and meet us. But we long for the fulness of His presence and glory, of which, what we now have, is the pledge and earnest.

JULY 8.

"*They told him that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.*"—LUKE xviii. 37, 38.

BARTIMEUS cries for mercy that he may receive his sight. The Man Jesus of Nazareth *passeth by.* Bartimeus determines to catch the favourable opportunity. In a few minutes this Jesus will be past, and the blind man's opportunity gone. Now is the accepted time for him. Now he may recover his sight or remain blind for ever. And how full of instruction is this! Prophetic of our position when Jesus still comes to us, as He does this day, in the midst of all our blindness to His glory, and the fulfilment of His great purpose, and affords us a space for repentance. We have heard say that He is verily and indeed present. Present in faith. Present in the symbols of the Sacrament. Present by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We come then before His presence, and cry, "Lord, have mercy upon us." "Son of David, have mercy upon us." Now is our opportunity. Now is the time, ere the Lord come again to judgment, when we may have our eyes opened. Let us seize it. Let us cry, "Open Thou our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." We who walk in darkness may see a great light. Oh for an ever-present consciousness of our need, that we may continually cry unto the Giver of all help!

JULY 9.

"What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight."—LUKE xviii. 41.

WHAT encouragement have we to continue calling upon God for the opening of the spiritual eye. Already has the light shined. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." Upon us who are in the shadow of death hath the light shined. Light has sprung up for the righteous. We know how true this is. We have been and are oppressed with the darkness as much as ever was the land of Egypt, but behold we have seen a great light. We have seen Jesus in the midst of the golden candlesticks. We are enlightened by the Holy Ghost. He is working in us to guide us out of the shadow of death. It is a spiritual reality that, dark though all things be, the Light hath shined which is to conduct us safely out of the horror of great darkness. Assured of this, not doubting the truth of this Light, it is our privilege to push forward out of the darkness to the Light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The right use to make of the amount of light we have already attained, is to raise a more urgent cry for the rending of the veil that yet darkens our eyes so that we see not the full glory of the Lord.

JULY 10.

"*The Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish.*" —EXOD. xix. 21.

HOW the Lord guarded the Mount and hedged it round, lest any one whom He called not, should presume to break in upon His presence. Our meditation on this calls upon us for penitence, because of the presumptuous sins which we have committed in counting lightly of, or intruding into, the presence of the Lord. It was because of the presence of the God of Israel that a solemn awe rested on Sinai in its terribleness. The same awe and reverence are due unto that Presence, now manifest in the flesh, in Jesus, and the members of His Body, and the ordinances and sacraments of His Church. God has Himself dwelt in lowly humanity, and has permitted the readiest access to His august Presence. He hath given such tender words of invitation, as "Come unto Me all ye that are weary," &c. But this was meant to enlarge our hearts to give Him reverence, homage, and worship, more ardent than Sinai's crowds could have done. Alas! how we have failed, how irreverent and presumptuous we have been! Let us be ready to recognise His Presence wherever He manifests Himself.

JULY 11.

"*They that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.*"—MARK xi. 9.

JESUS makes a triumphant entry into Jerusalem. All things are at His feet. The city rings with His welcome. The day of His triumphant entry into Jerusalem must have brought comfort and strength to the heart of the Saviour, and have prepared Him for His subsequent bitter trials. Jesus, as a man, was amenable to all the consolations of a man. He is about to endure the bloody sweat and agony, and to die on the cross. But before these things befall Him, He is filled with joy and triumph. He now *foretastes* the result of all His sufferings. The triumphant entry *foreshadows* the triumph over all His foes, and the royal glory in which, as King, He shall yet reign over the world. In His victory we conquer. Let us maintain the joyful assurance of our victory over all our enemies. We are filled with energy through faith in the triumph of our Lord. The confidence of victory in the day of the King's return in glory, fortifies us for the deep-wrought experience of trial, sorrow, and suffering, through which we must pass during all our pilgrimage until Jesus suddenly appears.

JULY 12.

"*Bear ye one another's burdens.*"—GAL. vi. 2.
"*Cast thy burden upon the Lord.*"—PS. lv. 22.

HOW can we bear the burdens of others unless our burden be cast upon the Lord? How can any man stand up before the Lord as a mediator and intercessor for all men, whose own conscience is not clean, and his heart at ease as regards all his own burdens? And how can any man be at ease who has not learned to cast his burden upon the Lord? This is solemn and heart-searching. No man can be a deliverer to others, or for others, who does not stand in the noble consciousness that Christ hath made him free. Let us realise that we are risen with Christ, and must not be under the power and influence of earthly cares and burdens. Our union with Him is to give us freedom to serve others for His sake. He delivers us from our burdens that we may go forth to help the brethren, and deliver them from their burdens by bringing them in prayer before the Father. Oh that we may be stirred up, that we may become aware of our liberty, of our power, in Christ Jesus, to take upon us the burdens of our brethren! We are to be fellow-workers with the Good Shepherd in sheltering and helping the flock.

JULY 13.

"*Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.*"—1 COR. xii. 18.

THERE be many gifts and talents in the Christian Church. But they are only of service to the Lord in proportion as they are used in the place of His appointment—in the place which He clearly marks out for each. To use our gifts otherwise is to use them for man, and for man's glory. God hath set the members of the Body of Christ in their several places, and each is to exercise the function required in that position in which God has put him. The hand is not to try to do the work of the foot, or the eye the work of the tongue. These things are impossible in the natural body. But alas! we strive after such an anomaly in the Body of Christ—the Church. This ought not to be. Let us uphold one another in our several places, however humble or however exalted. And let us not step out of our place to assume the place and try to exercise the functions required by God from another, and *not* from us. This is true liberty and true nobility. The glory of each man's place and gift is to use them in the unity of the one Body, and for the good of the whole Church. They are given not for selfish ends, but for God's glory and man's good.

JULY 14.

"*Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.*"—Ps. xc. 17.

WE cannot show forth "the beauty of the Lord," save as we have the presence and power of the Holy Ghost within us. To glorify Jesus is the desire of the Holy Spirit, and He cannot do this except through the members of Christ's Body. How then should we, who profess to yield ourselves to the Lord Jesus, who profess to feed upon Him as our life, who profess to love His appearing, greatly long to possess a greater fulness of the Holy Ghost! What hinders that we have not a greater fulness? Is there a reason for it in the reluctance of our hearts to endure the scorn and scoff of men? Is there a secret consciousness that to be energised and more abundantly filled with the Holy Ghost would bring us into a witness-bearing among men, which would infer an amount of separation for which we are not prepared? If so, then should we be humble and lowly, and mourn over this low state of Christian faith and love. We must, then, realise ourselves as hinderers of the Lord, and no more boast and lift up ourselves. Let us not be deceived. It is possible to join in the customary duties of religious life, yea, and to rejoice in them, and yet to have much of the love of the world abiding in us, unless we be filled with the Holy Ghost.

JULY 15.

"Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."—Ps. liii. 6.

THE children of God, though they be indeed "the Lord's free-men," cannot yet experience the fulness of the liberty which is in store for them. There are many adverse things, many mighty spiritual enemies, who are ever bringing us into captivity. The more we realise our standing in Christ, the more do we also realise the heaviness of our bondage, and our hearts are filled with longing for the ceasing of our captivity. The glorious liberty into which we shall enter at the appearing of Christ is the hope set before us. But the discipline and training we experience in our present lowly and sorrowful condition, are needed to prepare us for the glory yet to be revealed in us. This glory, this fulness that is ere long to come upon us, can only be known by those who are now content to take a low place, and from the depths of their captivity to cry aloud for deliverance. Again, it behoves those who are looking for the glory, to be exercised in confession of the evil and unrighteousness that prevail in their own hearts. Thus shall they be ready to accept that glorious salvation which will be granted in the day of the Lord. Then shall they rejoice and be very glad.

JULY 16.

"*Ye have received the Spirit of adoption. . . . . We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption.*"—ROM. viii. 15, 23.

HOW many are there who rejoice in what is called "the Spirit of adoption!" How few there be who "wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body!" It is not a wholesome condition of spirit to feed upon the thought of being children of adoption, without the exercise of spirit implied in waiting for the adoption. When once the full blessing of this Spirit of adoption stirs within us, we experience no rest so long as the body remains laden with corruption; for that which it thirsts after, as the result of being adopted, is a full and unlimited liberty to serve God without a hindrance. Does the Spirit of the Lord move us to accomplish a work for Him? Then immediately do we experience the seriousness of those obstacles which are presented before us now through reason of sin. What more natural, then, than that while engaged in activity of spirit now in God's service, this service should ever be accompanied with groaning desire for the day when this mortal shall put on immortality? So that while we walk in God's order and way, of necessity we refuse to be content therewith, rather desiring the coming again of the Lord to set all free for His service.

JULY 17.

"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."—LUKE v. 8.

THE sight of the Lord's glory in bringing so many fish into the net of Peter, brought the apostle into a wonderful experience. It brought him into a deep penitence. It revealed the nothingness of the creature. Before the fulness of God, man was found utterly empty, and utterly unworthy of the Divine Presence. In a few verses we read of this man's forsaking all and following the Lord Jesus. Is there not a blessed connexion between the two facts, as bearing upon our calling to follow the Lamb whithersoever He leads? Is it possible to follow on to enter upon the glory of the kingdom, until we have first, by faith, seen God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ; until we have seen His wondrous work in sacrifice, His boundless love in gathering all men under His shadow?

Surely we are now learning the emptiness of the creature, and his total unfitness for the fellowship and indwelling of God. God is drawing very near to us. By His gracious acts in the Church He is removing the veil and showing us His glory. Let us fall down saying, "I am a sinful man." Then shall we be found full of grace to follow the Lamb now at any hazard, until we enter with Him upon His glory.

JULY 18.

"*I do always those things that please Him.*"—JOHN viii. 29.

JESUS hath set us an example. As He always did those things that please the Father, we are to do the things that please our blessed Saviour. What are the things that please Him? Doubtless, that as He did His Father's will, so we may do His. Let us look, for our instruction, at two examples wherein things were done that pleased the Lord. Remember how Jesus expressed His great pleasure at the faith of the centurion. Remember how He accepted the homage of the woman's love when she poured the precious ointment on His head, and how He said it should "be told in the whole world for a memorial of her." *Faith* in His Divine Presence to heal and to deliver; *Love* to Him by laying all at His feet, are two conditions of spirit peculiarly well-pleasing to the Lord. We have still power to please Him by *faith* in His Presence in the ordinances of the Church, and in all the means of grace; and by devoting our most precious substance unto Him for His glory. We are to recognise the Heavenly Presence through the misty cloud of earthly things. It is most pleasing to the Lord that we have full confidence in *His* Presence to help now, and that we give up our most precious energies to His honour and glory.

JULY 19.

"In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people."—ISA. xi. 10.

HOW emphatic is this character of Jesus as the "Root!" From Him has sprung the Royal Seed. Because of His entering into and sharing our common humanity, hath risen up every plant, every stem of excellence and glory. Though Himself a Son born of a woman, yet Himself is the fountain-head from whence all have come. And while we look up unto Him as the source and fountain-head of our very existence, we pray earnestly, "O Root of Jesse, which standeth for an ensign of the nations, before whom kings shall shut their mouths, and unto whom the nations shall make their supplications, come Thou and deliver us; make no longer tarrying." We know that, however much at present the nations may be reckoning Christ and His seed as roots out of a dry ground, in which there is no form or comeliness, nevertheless when He appears again in His glory, we rejoice that all nations shall make their humble supplications before Him. Let us, as we thus pray, learn more and more dependence of spirit upon Him. Let us be more and more rooted in Him and conformed to Him. Going deep with Him into His sufferings, we shall be ready to enter with Him on His glory.

JULY 20.

"*I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread.*"—EXOD. xvi. 12.

WE are told that, because the Lord heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, manna came down from heaven. God hereby, on the one hand, shows out that love which returneth good for evil. On the other, He teaches the Israelites with what humility of heart it becomes them to receive it. Let us meditate this day upon these things as they bear upon our receiving that of which the manna was a type—even the gift of the Body and Blood of Christ, the true Bread which came down from heaven. Who can receive it except they who discern its presence amongst us as the most marvellous of all God's acts of love and pity to us? He cannot discern it who fails to reflect this same love to all around. We dwell among much that is evil, and murmuring, and provoking. Are we enlarging our love in such circumstances, and showing ourselves ever ready to return good for evil? How the precious gift of the Body and Blood of Christ should humble us! Because *we* have sinned, *He* has been crucified. Because *we* are daily crucifying Him afresh, *He* is ever given to us as a sacrifice. Truly, the more we receive His grace, the more must we become ashamed, contrite, humble, lowly.

JULY 21.

"*There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.*"—1 COR. xii. 6.

IN order to a right appreciation of the presence of the Holy Ghost with us, let us meditate His Divinity. As is the Father and the Son, such also is the Holy Ghost, uncreate, incomprehensible, eternal. In the Holy Trinity, none is afore or after the other. But the whole three are co-eternal and co-equal. He is God the Holy Ghost, though, in His love and humility, He is content to proceed from the Father and the Son, and to be in the Body of the Son as one who serveth. Yet His presence is Divine; bringing not only the grace of Almightiness to help, but communicating to us the very essence of the character of God. Through His instrumentality abiding in us, we are not merely made acquainted with God, but we are enabled to receive the very life and mind of God in the use, by the Holy Ghost, of the symbols and means ordained; so that in communion with the Father, through the Son, we are presenting unto Him the petitions which, being wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, are the very things God will answer to the faithful. He is God who inspires them. He is God who, in the merits of His sacrifice, upbears them. He is God into whose ears they enter. Thus we experience the truth expressed in John xiv. 23.

JULY 22.

"*The prince of this world cometh.*"—JOHN xiv. 30.

BESIDES the coming of the Comforter, our Lord announces another coming. The Comforter is indeed to come. But Jesus says also, "The prince of this world cometh." This intimation was first fulfilled in the future history of our Lord's temptations in the garden, and in His final struggle on the cross; and since then in the oppression of His people by Satan. Herein is the great tribulation of those who have received the presence of the Comforter, that, being in a world of sin and a body of death, they are contending with this prince of darkness; so that we are continually constrained to fall back upon the mercy and sacrifice of Jesus, who has left us this assurance: "In Me ye shall have peace." In no other place can peace be found, because in Him Satan had no dwelling-place or dominion. Our blessed Lord said, "Now is the prince of this world cast out." Truly was it so in His willing obedience and sacrifice of Himself as a whole burnt-offering to God! And He has sent the Comforter that we may be uplifted to look unto Him in the day of temptation, and also to offer up ourselves as true whole burnt-offerings unto God. By which twofold action we, too, shall cast out the prince of this world.

JULY 23.

"He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"—1 JOHN iv. 20.

HAVING given us His Holy Spirit, God calls on us to make manifest the fruit thereof in that which is essentially His name, viz., LOVE. It is a vain sentiment to say we love the unseen God, except we do this in very deed, by loving man whom we have seen. We are ready enough to love those who are pleasant and agreeable to us. But this does not come up to the full requirement of our duty. We are to love man, as he is the creature of God, as he is our brother, baptized in unity with us into the Body of Christ. We profess in our creed that "we believe in the communion of saints." Let us not hold this in mere words, as a kind of theory, but as a very wide-reaching and practical truth. We are united unto all who are united with the Church of Christ; and we are to love them all, even although they be untoward and unloving towards us. Filled with the Holy Ghost, our attitude towards man is, as a matter of course, one of love, forbearance, and long-suffering. It is love to man, man as the image of God—to man as redeemed by Christ—to man irrespective of his bearing toward us.

JULY 24.

"*Love your enemies.*"—LUKE vi. 27.
"*Love the brotherhood.*"—1 PET. ii. 17.

CHRIST loved men and died for them irrespective of their feelings towards Him. He loved ALL. We are not to be less restricted in our love than He was. If we follow His example, our love will branch itself into many aspects, according to the condition of those we love. Is man wicked, vain, and foolish? Then love will be exercised in pity, confession, and intercession for the recovery of the image of God. Is man unkind and despiteful to us? Then love will be exercised in returning good for evil, and bringing down blessings on his head. Is man poor, oppressed, and trodden down like a beast? Then love will be exercised in self-denying exertion, putting forward a helping hand, and will show itself in strong crying and tears for God to send help. Is man adorned with all goodness and comeliness of conduct? Then will love be exercised in following his godly example, and upbearing him in faith and prayer, that he may continue in every good work. Is man full of kindness and love to us? Then will love be exercised in all thankfulness for such a mercy from God, and rejoice in hope of that day when we shall be able to see God, because we have loved man whom we see now.

JULY 25.

"He began to cry out, and say, Jesus, Thou son of David, have mercy on me."—MARK x. 47.

THE cry of the blind man, that the Lord would have mercy upon him, is now our cry. We oftentimes in the day are made to cry out, "Have mercy upon us!" It is the cry of a faithful people. It is the cry of a people who are attaining to realise their real condition, whilst abiding in the flesh, to be a condition of blindness. It is one of the testimonies of conscience to the vanity of the flesh, that, so long as we are in it, we are in a comparative state of blindness; we cannot look upon God. This blind man heard of Jesus. He had a great desire to see Him. He asked and obtained his desire. So we have heard of Jesus. We have heard of His example, of His love. The apostle has discoursed to us of the excellence of charity, of which Jesus was the very embodiment. We are searched by this; we discover how far we are removed from the law of love. We contrast our present experience with what the Lord says it should be. We see how different our spirit is from that which should be our very being. Therefore in blindness we cry out, "Have mercy upon us!" Let us be deeply humbled. Let us no more be high-minded or vain-glorious.

JULY 26.

"Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net."—LUKE v. 5.

THE servants of the Lord know that their calling is to toil—to "toil all the night." The Master toiled during all the night of His humiliation, and received His reward from the Father on the morning of His resurrection. As is the Master, so are the servants and their work. Till the morning come, and the Master's presence and word shall bring a change, they "toil;" it is their calling, but (blessed truth!) their calling is in *Him*, their toiling is in *Him*. Without Him they are nothing, and have nothing to do. This is the joy of the servants, that it is the Master's work they do, and under His eyes they "toil." He is their all. He giveth the work and its toil, and He shall be their exceeding great reward when the work shall be presented to the Father. Let us be more and more encouraged to put ourselves in His hands that we may work for Him, and that He may serve Himself of us for His glory. And let us pray that we may know what work He requireth of us. It is "the work given us to do" that we are "to finish."

JULY 27.

"When He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered."—MATT. iv. 2.

JESUS was baptized with the Holy Ghost; sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Here was a fulness and richness of grace indeed! But behold Him in the wilderness, so straitened that there is no bread for His hunger. This seems such a contrast to the abundance that rested on Him. And it was well. God was in the act of proving the man as to wherein He counted the great excellence of His riches; whether it was in the abundance of things in His power, or only in God irrespective of all other things. Jesus knew this, and He gave evidence that His life, as a creature, hung upon God and upon His Word. That was enough to carry Him through His days of hunger. Now, they who have received the Holy Ghost are put on trial as to whether they are resting on God only. He leaves us in a wilderness state, very desolate, very bare, very naked. Satan works upon this desolation, to cast doubts into the mind as to whether we have received the Spirit and are the sons of God. He succeeds sadly where the interest in this holy calling is cooled and abated. But he is drawn back when there continueth in the heart increasing prayer, waiting, self-denial. The heart feels how sure is its footing when it rests only on God and His Word.

JULY 28.

"*I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter.*"
—JOHN xiv. 16.

THE descent of the Holy Ghost upon us is a great work; and yet that work is only known as in its beginning,—in its "earnest,"—in its first-fruit. The blessed Spirit hath changed many a heart. But, behold, His work is to change the body from the mortal into the immortal. Yea, to change the face of all creation,—to make all things new.

We have now a Comforter, called an "Advocate," (or Paraclete,) pleading for us at God's right hand. We have "another Comforter," (Paraclete,) pleading within us, and ever urging us to yield ourselves to God. How we are panoplied for our warfare! How graciously we are provided with help and strength, that we may attain unto the end of our calling! Jesus, the Son at God's right hand, interceding for us! The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, abiding in us and with us, until we be wholly brought into the mind of God! We have the ministrations of the Son, and the operations of the Spirit, in all the ordinances and sacraments of His appointment. The Son is present to prove Himself the abiding Intercessor! The Holy Ghost is present to prove Himself the universal Comforter!

JULY 29.

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."—JOHN XV. 12.

How shall we love the brethren? How shall Christ's commandment to "love one another" be kept? Surely it is by constant contemplation of the love wherewith the Saviour did love, does love, and will love unto the end! Always abiding in loving fellowship with Him, wrapt up in fixedness of communion with Him, our spirits will become habituated to His love. And then, when we come in contact with the sons of men, the love of Jesus will be expressed in our words and actions towards each and all. Oh, it is only as we steadfastly look at the Saviour's patient love, that our spirit will be brought to refuse to look at the weakness of men, or to hate and despise them.

Full of hope for the speedy coming of the Lord, we are in God's hands to be prepared for it. And surely not the least of the tests whereby the Lord proveth us, must be the love of the brethren of Jesus. Who can expect to meet the God-man, whom now they see not, save as they love His brethren whom they do see? Who can welcome Jesus, save those who welcome the brethren? Who can hail Him King in His glory, save they who hail His presence as one with His brethren in weakness?

JULY 30.

"*For they say, The Lord seeth us not: the Lord hath forsaken the earth.*"—EZEK. viii. 12.

IT is in the human heart at all times and in all places to say, "The Lord hath forsaken the earth." "The Lord seeth not." It is most evil for man under any circumstances to say so. It is evil for a heathen man to say so, for God shows His presence in creation and providence. Still more evil for the Jew in covenant with God to say so, for the symbol of God's presence was in the temple, and the record of His constant working was in the Scriptures. And yet more and more evil for the baptized in covenant with Christ to say so! For they have the very life of Christ within them, and they are indwelt by the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the blessed Trinity. The privilege and duty lying upon us is to fear before God. Oh, to set the Lord alway before us! Ever to realise, "Thou Lord seest me." Ever to tremble at His Word, and to fear to think or act contrary thereunto. So exercised, not only will holiness and purity be the delight of the soul, but sorrow will find room within us, and will sigh and cry unto God because of the terrible evils that are resulting from the Christian man acting as if God had forsaken the earth and saw not!

JULY 31.

"*They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.*"—Ps. cxxv. 1.

Our encouragement to use that abstinence and self-discipline so needful as a preparation for the glory, is to be found in the example of Jesus Christ. His strength to overcome the temptations of the devil lay in His humility. A high look goes before a fall. But, being of a lowly and dependent spirit, He fell not. He knew His creature nothingness, and habituated Himself to look only at the Almighty. He sought no argument against the devil in Himself. He was so emptied of self, that He thought only of the power which lay in the Word of His God—"*It is written.*" Now we are called to enter upon a struggle, and it behoves us to carry ourselves with great lowliness. The eye no more fixed on self, but on God's Lamb. There is our strength; and if there is earnest worship of Him, the Holy Ghost will convey such a discernment of the creature helplessness and sin, that a beautiful dependence will be wrought in us, and we shall obtain help as we ever look to Jesus; and thus, too, shall we learn how much there is yet in us to be crucified and subdued. Hence the weighty duty of self-discipline. Hence the abiding struggle to put off the old man with his deeds. We shall conquer if we "trust in the Lord."

AUGUST 1.

"*In the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.*"—Ps. lvii. 1.

THE world during the present generation has been the scene of many and mighty changes. There has been an upheaving and uprooting of much that seemed to be firmly established. Men's minds are filled with uneasiness, and fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth. We are undoubtedly in the midst of perilous times. Now, when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, it becomes the inhabitants of the world to learn righteousness. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the wicked pass on and are punished. Because of the sins of Christendom, the Lord has been long smiting us with many spiritual and temporal judgments; and the clouds which are continually gathering seem to indicate still more dreadful calamities to come. Let it be our study, then, to prepare for such times. If we would be truly safe in such a time, we should be taking the course which the Psalmist exemplified in the words before us.

AUGUST 2.

"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in Thee."—Ps. lvii. 1.

THE whole of this psalm sets before us the strong confidence which David had in God in a time of great danger. He had, indeed, remarkable occasion to observe the Lord's goodness and care of him in his many wonderful escapes from the hands of Saul, that deceitful and blood-thirsty man. And all these deliverances he improved, for strengthening his faith and trust in God. If the Lord had not been on his side, surely men would have swallowed him up when their wrath was kindled against him. He had no mercy to expect at the hand of his enemies. But he also knew that the Lord is a merciful God. Therefore he begins this psalm with the earnest prayer, "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in Thee." It is only when we feel that God is a God of mercy that He becomes the object of our trust and confidence. When we discover that He is a God of pardoning mercy, our souls are filled with trust, resting in the work of Jesus.

AUGUST 3.

"Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice."—Ps. lxiii. 7.

THEY that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved. The Psalmist here declares what would be his exercise, and to whom he would still have recourse for safety in dangerous times. He had trusted in the Lord in the days that were past, and he found it a safe and pleasant exercise. He would therefore persevere in it. "Yea," he saith, "in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast." He took God himself as his refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. This is the course which the Lord's people are still to take in every time of calamity, whether public or private. Under all their personal troubles, they find safety and consolation in God. The belief in His favour and love makes their trials light and sweet, and His faithfulness secures deliverance from them, and victory over them in due time. Oh that our faith in God may be strengthened, that we may be without fear or distraction!

AUGUST 4.

"*If ye will . . . . ; walk contrary unto Me: then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury.*"—LEV. xxvi. 27, 28.

MEN often look upon sin with indifference; but it is impossible God can do so. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. It is a violation of His law, which is holy, just, and good. The justice and holiness of His nature demand that sin should not go unpunished. Accordingly public calamities and judgments never take place but where the sins of a people have paved the way for them. The waters of the flood were not poured out on the earth until God saw that the wickedness of man was great. The dreadful destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was not brought on till their wickedness reached up to heaven. That the present time is remarkable for abounding iniquity is so notorious to every serious observer, as to need no proof. The present age is characterised by apostasy from the faith, by prevailing error, immorality, profaneness, and infidelity, contempt of God's ordinances, and consequent spiritual barrenness. Alas! how much are we doing to provoke the wrath of God!

AUGUST 5.

"At His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation."—JER. x. 10.

BOTH a person and a people may sometimes have trouble appointed unto them for their correction, and for the trial of their faith and patience. God sees it needful that they should be "in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." But when wickedness is prevalent in a land, God is provoked to bring down the effects of His just displeasure and wrath upon it. And this wrath is sometimes on all the multitude thereof, on all ranks and degrees of men. In like manner we read of the generation of His wrath. How inconceivably dreadful and dangerous is the state of that generation if they shall say, "Peace, peace," and then sudden destruction cometh upon them! It is a dreadful thing to think that the God of heaven may be looking down on us with an eye of indignation. Oh, let us be warned!

AUGUST 6.

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"—EZEK. xxxiii. 11.

IF God's loving-kindness is better than life, His wrath must be worse than death. Who knoweth the power of His anger? When we consider who He is, and who the objects of it are, it appears to us infinitely terrible. The boldest, and most daring, and the most powerful are as nothing before Him. "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, He will whet His sword; He hath bent His bow and made it ready." The wrath of the Lord of hosts must infallibly set itself against a sinning person and people, if they turn not to Him with true repentance and reformation. It is impossible in any other way to escape His righteous judgments. But God's loving-kindness and mercy are ever prepared to go forth towards those who turn to Him. He is calling upon us by all the dealings of His providence, by the appeals of conscience, by the influences of His Word and ordinances, by the pleadings of the Holy Spirit, by the broken Body and shed Blood of His dear Son, and by the hope of future glory, to come to Him and abide under the shadow of His wings.

AUGUST 7.

"Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."—MATT. xxiv. 22.

FROM love to His own people God will shorten the evil days and bring them to an end. When God's judgments have done their work against His enemies, then we may expect the Church of Christ to come forth from the trial fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. The Lord shall comfort Zion, the Lord is her defence.

Were not our land defiled with sin we would have nothing to fear. God would be our friend, and the Lord would make even our enemies to be at peace with us. Therefore let us flee out of the way of wrath under the shadow of Jehovah's wings. A reconciled God is our defence. Let us therefore possess our souls in patience, and rejoice in the safety provided for us. God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Let us be comforted. No calamities shall prevail against the Church and people of God. Glorious days are yet in store for them!

AUGUST 8.

"If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants," &c.—MATT. xxiv. 48–51.

THESE words show us, that when we cease to look for the coming of the Lord, we are likely also to break away from the unity and love of brotherhood. When we hold fast the hope of the appearing of Jesus, our hearts are purified. As it takes hold of our spirits, the law of charity and patience reigns more and more within us. It reveals so much of the holiness and terribleness of meeting God, that a corresponding discovery is made of our own unfaithfulness before Him. And this, again, leads to great humility, penitence, and casting ourselves at His feet for mercy. And not only this; but beholding a like unfaithfulness in the brethren, the heart yearns with pity and forbearance one for another. Looking forward to meet the Lord Jesus, and to abide ever in union with Him, we should be stirred up to remember our fellowship with all His brethren, and to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Let it be ours to bear each other's burdens, not judging one another, not smiting our fellow-servants, but ministering one to another the long-suffering and compassion which we now experience from Jesus amidst our failings.

AUGUST 9.

"Your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."—2 THESS. i. 3.

THE view which men in these days are tempted to take of faith, is personal and selfish. It extends no further than to enable us to embrace some hope of our own salvation. And conscious of such faith, men suppose they are "men of faith." God is indeed to be praised that even this little remains; but it is not to be mistaken for that faith which stretches forth to the accomplishment of the work of God in the Church, the Body of Christ. The faith which will accomplish the *bare* deliverance of the sinner from hell, is not sufficient to hold him in consciousness of his unity with all the brethren, and cannot lead him to put himself into God's hand, that he may be a source of blessing and help to the whole Church. We should waken up to this distinction between our mere personal salvation, and our salvation in unity with the whole Church. It is a very subtle and dangerous form of selfishness, when a man's thoughts never stretch beyond the desire for his own individual salvation. In this condition he cannot rise up to the largeness of God's love and purpose through Christ. He cannot see how, through fellowship with Jesus, he is brought into the "communion of saints."

AUGUST 10.

"*In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us.*"—ROM. viii. 37.

THERE are great and heavy temptations resting upon and encompassing us in these days. They are more subtle than gross, but equally seductive in their influence, equally ruinous, if yielded to. The enemies of God's people are compared to an exceeding great army. We are beset on all sides by their snares. How can we escape, save as in great lowliness of spirit, we be found casting ourselves upon the help of the Lord. He has promised to provide a way of escape. He has promised to open a door of hope unto us; and none shall experience that deliverance save those who, abiding under a consciousness of their utter weakness and proneness to evil, do put their trust in the sacrifice of Jesus. They shall know it who come before God pleading His all-sufficient sacrifice as all their hope of deliverance now or hereafter. When the day shall come that the faithful shall be taken away to meet the Lord in the air, then shall be known what a sure salvation there is to those who honour the sacrifice of the Lord.

AUGUST 11.

"Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers and to the valleys: Behold," &c.—EZEK. vi. 3.

IT is instructive to see how God seems to address the land of Israel, the mountains of Israel, its rivers, its hills, its valleys, as if He spoke to living and rational beings. This leads us to an enlargement of idea as regards the place of creation in the purpose of God. It is associated with man in His purpose. God looks upon it as the theatre of man's action, as the agent for developing man's powers. Its sounds, the songs of its birds, the hum of its insects, the ripple of its waters, the deep and majestic roar of its waves, are all for man's ear to enjoy. The treasures of its metals, the marvellous formation of its strata, the height of its mountains, the depths of its valleys, are all intended for the exercise of man's faculties. The flowers, the trees, the herbs, are all at man's feet, that he may enjoy them, and speak of them in their glory, as did Solomon of old. It becomes us to look upon creation as having within it a Divine meaning, which we are to search out and express. Because of our fallen condition, and the curse resting upon the earth, we can only do this in part now; but hereafter creation will tell out fully the glory of God.

AUGUST 12.

"*We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*"—ROM. viii. 22.

WE learn that the reason why the land of Israel lies desolate, is because of the people's sin. But when the new heart, the new life, beams forth in that nation, the desert will become like the garden of Eden. Let us meditate this in regard to creation at large. God made it. He said, Behold it is all very good. But to develop all its goodness, required the instrumentality of man as made in God's image. To him God gave creation, that its glories, its beauties, its tales of wonder and of love, its language, and its eternal design, might be unfolded. To man He gave it that he might dress it and keep it, not for the lesser object of his own support, but for the higher aim of bringing out more and more what every object in creation would tell of the glory of God. But the purpose of God that man should unfold all the goodness and meaning of creation, has for a while been hindered by the fall. Man, however, has been redeemed; and when he is fully reinstated in the new creation, then all nature shall speak to him of the manifold wisdom of God.

AUGUST 13.

"Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."—EZEK. xxxvii. 9.

GOD calls upon the breath to come from the four winds, and to breathe upon the dry bones of the house of Israel. He compares the Holy Ghost to wind. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," &c. The Spirit filled the house like a mighty rushing wind. It is all-powerful—expressive of the sovereignty of God the Holy Ghost. It can overthrow whatever opposes it. It can wither away that which comes in its path. It can soothe and nourish with its zephyrs the tenderest life. It can draw, as into its bosom, the gentlest flowers. It can with its storms make the mighty tremble. It can with its softness cheer the most timid. The wind conveys to us an illustration how all the elements would tell us of some glory and excellence of God. Now, that which shall breathe life upon the dry bones of Israel—that which shall again make the spiritually dead stand upon their feet, is nothing short of the fulness of the Holy Ghost. The wind blows from different quarters. So we cannot be blessed save through the diversified yet one operation of the Holy Ghost.

AUGUST 14.

"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another."—1 COR. xii. 25.

THAT which divides is of man; that which joins is of God. That which exalts itself into separation is of man; that which acts in unity of purpose and design is of God. One part of the Church separateth itself, and says it can serve God without the other; and the other is content to be without it. One part is envious of the operation of God in another, and declares itself more favoured and useful. Perhaps it comes to be blinded altogether, and cannot see what use any operation can serve but that which is developed in itself. Few things show out the vanity of man so much as when, on the one hand, he despises a brother's gift; or, on the other, is jealous of it, as if it were not the operation of the same Spirit. Nothing, on the contrary, more marks the presence and power of God than when we realise our dependence on the welfare of all the brethren, rejoice in helping them, and glory in their gifts, even as our own, because they are members with us of the one Body —the Church.

AUGUST 15.

"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."—MATT. vii. 21.

ALL confession of doctrine is essential in its place; but when it comes to be merely, "Lord, Lord," it is worse than of no avail to the creature. God deals with Christian men on the understanding that, being engrafted into Christ, they are professors of the truth. Not engrafted, however, for the purpose of believing certain dogmas, but for the purpose of manifesting the life and actions of the Lord Jesus. It is he who *doeth* His will, who yieldeth his members servants to righteousness, and who has the fruit unto holiness, who shall enter into the kingdom of God. Let none of us, then, rest in a mere profession of any set of doctrines. But, whilst confessing the truth, and denying it not, let us see to it that we be up and doing the will of God. Let us follow the example of the blessed Saviour, who rendered unto God a perfect obedience, and who found it His meat and His drink to do His Father's will. Our calling is to show forth the very life and character of Christ. Alas! how we have failed in this our calling! Lord, make us more faithful!

AUGUST 16.

"And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."—EXOD. xxxiii. 14.

THE temptations that surrounded the children of Israel in their journey through the wilderness were most severe. But God was with them; therefore they were inexcusable. The temptations to which we are exposed are strong; but God is in the midst of us; He who is the "way, the truth, and the life," is our God and Saviour. Abiding in Him we have a way of escape out of every snare. Jesus was tempted in all points—yea, He hath already borne all our temptations. None overtake us but such as have fallen upon Him who knoweth how to deliver us. Let us meet the various trials of our lot with a humble and thankful heart. Let us not stop to look at their power, but hold them all as already overcome, because we are in Him who hath overcome. Israel saw the pillar continually. We see and know more than that; for Christ dwelleth in us; and He communicateth to us patience to endure, and power to overcome. So shall we be preserved unhurt, until we be taken away from all temptations, and admitted to His very presence in glory.

AUGUST 17.

"*The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep His commandments or no.*"—DEUT. viii. 2.

WHAT glories await us in the kingdom of God! What an inheritance of bliss is reserved, ready to be revealed! We are the children of the kingdom, heirs with Jesus Christ. And now, as we proceed on the way to the fulness of glory, God meeteth us, in His providence, with many trials. So He met Israel coming out of Egypt; and it is very instructive to observe, that when the people sinned and fell in their journey, it was in the presence of trials and circumstances most painful to flesh and blood to endure. But their fall proved what was in their hearts. Now, as we are journeying to the promised land, and drawing near to enter upon the inheritance, we are met by searchings of heart, vexations, trials, and disappointments. How do we receive them? They form an essential part of the Lord's dealing with us. They test our faith. Feeling our extreme corruption and unworthiness, let us thankfully receive every trial as a fellow-worker with God to humble and cleanse our hearts. If we say "Amen" to His dealings with us, then, though we be humbled, we shall not fall.

AUGUST 18.

"*Pray without ceasing.*"—1 THESS. v. 17.

IT requires hearts emptied of their own cares, fears, and objects, to wrestle with God in prayer, that deliverance may come to the oppressed children of God. It is God's purpose to grant deliverance, great and glorious, to those who now sigh under the dominion of evil persons and things. But corresponding to its greatness must be the living cry of those who come before Him with intercessions on behalf of the desolate. God's heart yearns to send forth salvation to His people. Is there in us a corresponding yearning of heart to obtain it? Jacob knew that the Lord had a purpose to bless him; and he wrestled for it even to the shrinking of his thigh. Are we so devoted in our cry and prayer that it costs us the withering of the glory of the flesh, rather than fail of the blessing? Daniel knew that God had a purpose to turn the captivity of Jerusalem, and he set himself by prayer and supplications to seek it. Are we setting ourselves with a like earnest spirit to pray for the turning of the captivity of the Lord's redeemed from the slavery under which they still groan, by reason of the oppression of the world, the flesh, and the devil?

AUGUST 19.

"No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."
—1 COR. xii. 3.

ALL men may call him "Lord." Devils call Him "Lord," after a sense; but to acknowledge His Lordship and authority in humanity, is an operation of the Holy Ghost. "Jesus" is His human name, the name expressive of His humanity in the weakness of flesh. And to discern through the veil thereof, and see the glory of the Godhead, is the mighty working of the Spirit. And in order that we may rightly appreciate this truth, it is needful that we not only acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus at God's right hand, but reverence it in every place where He has set His name of Headship or Lordship. In the State, from the monarch downwards; in the Church; in the Family; in all these, we see the principle of headship or lordship set forth. Jesus, as Lord, rules over His people; but during His absence from earth, He exercises His Lordship through the instrumentality of men, whom He sets in places of rule. Are we able to pierce the veil of earthly things and of human weakness, and see in those set over us none other than the presence of the Lord to uphold and guide us?

AUGUST 20.

"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."—ROM. iv. 25.

CHRIST died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. Christ rose from the dead, according to the Scriptures. He died and rose again, not only out of love to man, but to obey and fulfil the revealed will of the everlasting Father. Oh, what a rock to rest on, then, is the atonement accomplished by the Saviour! We flee to Him as lost ones, and find salvation for the ruined soul. As we yield to the power of Jesus, the Holy Ghost will lead the heart more and more to apprehend the riches of the grace that flows through the Saviour's atonement. In our penitence for the sins of our ruined, mortal, corrupt bodies, we flee to the Rock of our salvation, in faith that *there* God grants us peace and rest. *There*, in the Lamb of God, do we discover all the source of unhesitating confidence before God. *There*, the ground on which we build our hope of future deliverance and glory at the appearing of Christ. *There*, the source from which we draw the spirit of charity towards all, so that we are filled with consuming love for all for whom Christ died.

AUGUST 21.

"*He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.*"—LUKE v. 4.

How full of mercy and pity is the Lord! He taught the people out of a ship He found at the side of the lake, and rewards the owner of it for his act of kindness in giving Him the use of the vessel. The men had toiled all night and caught nothing. He tells them to "launch out into the deep, and let down their nets for a draught." The reward of this obedience was "a great multitude of fishes." This event teaches us a lesson respecting the great pity of the Lord for the toils of His children. Is He engaged evermore sending forth from His heavenly throne the wonders of His light and truth? He is equally engaged watching the needs and pitying the infirmities of His people. Is He ready to administer comfort to the hearts of men? He is equally ready to minister to their daily wants, and out of that ministry to reveal His mercy and love. Peter, after this miracle, was filled with contrition, and was called to the apostleship. So we learn that while the Lord is dispensing His bounty to His children, He is, through these means, preparing the way for higher and ulterior blessings, beyond what they think or are worthy to receive.

AUGUST 22.

"*Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion.*"
—Ps. xlviii. 2.

JERUSALEM was built for the honour and glory of God. It was a city compact together; beautiful for situation; the joy of the whole earth; the city of the Great King; God was known in it for a refuge. And one day there sat over against that city this Great King, veiled in mortal flesh, weeping because of it. The city itself made to be the joy of the earth,—the Great King weeping over it in bitterness of grief,—what a contrast! Wherefore? The Jews so far forgot the purpose of God among them, that they fell from their heavenly calling, and settled themselves down in the earthly condition. They made Jerusalem a mere place of selfish glory. They forgot it was the city of the Lord; and when He came to it, He was despised and cast out. They knew not the Lord of the city. They were taken unawares. He came visiting it in mercy, and they knew not the day of their visitation. The very chosen people of God became worse than the men of Nineveh. Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. The Jews rejected a greater than Jonah. These things are solemn warnings to us. Let us not fall from our high calling, or be buried in the cares or pleasures of this life.

AUGUST 23.

"*How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*" —MATT. xxiii. 37.

WHEN Jesus wept over Jerusalem, it was over His own city. It was to His own children, the members of a holy covenant whom He had taken under His protection, that He said, "How oft would I have gathered thee," &c., "but ye would not." Here is a contrast. Jerusalem and her children were already under the protection of God. And yet He speaks of her as refusing so to be. Let us meditate this, as it bears on the condition of Christendom. God has set His ordinances over the Church, and over the family. All are protected thereby. The shields that are around men are of the Lord. But, alas! how many fail to recognise and love these as the means by which God would shelter His people. Men have lost faith in the ordinances as God's covering wings. They do not look unto them, and go under them, in faith that God's presence is with them. Where is the man who looks upon a pastor as a protecting wing of the Lord? He is looked upon as a goodly part of the fabric of society, and one that is used to comfort men's hearts; but he is not realised as the shield of the Lord. Let us fear lest in despising God's ordinances we despise God himself.

AUGUST 24.

"*Our soul waiteth for the Lord: He is our help and our shield.*"
—Ps. xxxiii. 20.

THE perils that beset the Christian are many. Human wisdom or exertion cannot deliver us from them. We feel our helplessness, and look for help from the Lord, on whom our eye doth ever rest. Our present condition is a trial of faith and patience; it must be also one of holy confidence in God. He gives us promises most precious, and words full of comfort. Beholding the prosperity of earthly and fleshly ways, we can yet sing, "The Lord bringeth them to nought, and maketh the devices of the people of none effect." Men rest in fleshly ways, as if they had come from infinite wisdom. They form plans on principles which have their origin in the earth, as if there was no doubt of their stability. But the eye of faith discerns them all as founded on the sand. They who look only to the Lord for help have need to keep their spirits in much discipline while mingling with the business and customs of society, lest they drink in the spirit of lightness and self-confidence, which is the accompaniment of all earthly ways. Looking only to the Lord, our life must be one of discipline, self-denial, and retirement from the devices of man.

AUGUST 25.

"*The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.*"—JOHN iv. 9.

WE all know the position in which the Samaritan stood to the Jew, and also the condition of mind which the Jew maintained toward the Samaritan. Is there any instruction in this matter for us in these days? Verily there is. The Christian Church is rent into many sections. According to our peculiar education we imbibe prejudices. We favour some sects more than others. We look upon this one as not so erroneous as the other. We fix in our minds that one will be more useful to God than another. We look upon this one, that God's ways are more seen in it than in another. Such feelings must be all cast away. In charity, patience, and catholicity of heart, we must be watching for and expecting the development of God's mercy and purpose, even in those whom, from infancy, we have been used to look upon as Jew did upon Samaritan. Nor must we so do from a sentimental feeling about God's mercy. It is essential that we have the heart of Jesus toward all, realising that He is holding in His grasp of love every section of the Church.

AUGUST 26.

"*He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.*"
—MARK vii. 34.

JESUS looked up to heaven and sighed. Jesus sighed and spake, "Ephphatha—be opened," to the deaf man. Oh that wondrous sigh!—that wondrous word, the first the deaf man heard! How the soul of Jesus was exercised! It was a sigh poured out, not because of the infirmity of this deaf man merely, but because of the oppression which rests upon the faculties of all humanity through sin. Jesus sighed because of the many ways by which His Father was dishonoured by all the faculties of his creatures. Jesus sighed and longed for the time when the ear would hear His Father's law, and the tongue would utter His Father's truth. Over all His children He now says, "Ephphatha," that there may be the restoration of all faculties to their right use. Known to the Saviour must be the terrible use made of the tongue and of the ear of man throughout all generations! What emphasis this gives to His "sigh"—to His "Ephphatha!" How His holy soul must long for the day when the tongue shall be a well of life, a stream of blessing to creation, and the ear ever open to the words of eternal love and wisdom!

AUGUST 27.

"Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 COR. xv. 57.

THE atonement made by Jesus is the pledge of our victory over sin and all its fruits. Blessed, indeed, are we when we are led to confidence in our standing in Christ Jesus through His atonement! Faith apprehends how even sinners are clothed with righteousness! He who clothed so beautifully the lilies of the field, clothes us with the pure white of Christ's righteousness. The Gospels bear witness of His power to forgive—of His power to heal—of His power to cast out the devil—of His power over death—and of His power over the grave. As we are established in faith of His atonement—as we apprehend the standing we have received through the merits of the atonement—so will God vouchsafe to us through Christ power to triumph over sin and all its fruits; yea, through faith we know that victory over death and the grave is secured to us in Christ's atonement. In the joy of this we wait for the Lord from heaven. We have no vain ambition to find a higher or better standing through any devices of the creature. We rejoice that God has made His children perfect and complete in Christ Jesus. Therefore do we long for His coming again.

AUGUST 28.

"This woman hath anointed My feet with ointment."
—LUKE vii. 46.

THE record of the woman who anointed the feet of the Saviour with the precious ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, is very touching and very instructive. There is in this incident an outpouring of the woman's heart towards Jesus. She was fired with the zeal of an all-conquering love, and broke through all the restraints which cold and lukewarm hearts would have imposed upon her. She had no calculation what those around her would think. Her heart was engrossed with her Saviour. She was alive with the consciousness that a marvellous work was being accomplished for her. The heart of Jesus ever responds to a feeling of love on the part of the most despised and outcast of the children of men. Jesus rejected not the offering of this poor sinner, but received and esteemed her outpouring of love as a memorable example for all ages. Oh that we were filled with the zeal of such a love for Jesus! Let us burst the restraints of a cold and lukewarm formalism, and let our love be poured forth warm with the freshness of gratitude for having been forgiven much!

AUGUST 29.

"*Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him: talk ye of all His wondrous works.*"—Ps. cv. 2.

We should take heed lest, in our worship, the use of the Psalms dwindle down into a mere matter of music; lest we sing them before God with the lip, and not the heart. Our whole being should be girt up to pour out the words before God as an act of intelligent faith. The more we are thus exercised, the more light will be given us regarding their meaning. It is true, they are devotional in their character, but they are also most expressive of the eternal and gracious purpose of God. Perhaps they are the deepest expression of that purpose, inasmuch as they are most rich in the communion of the heart with God. They are not monkish sentiments: they are the deep prophetic utterance of the will and design of God. The Gospels tell us of the work of Jesus, and of the glorious hope of His appearing again: the Psalms lift up our hearts towards God, and we sing for joy, because of this work and this hope. Let the Psalms be sung, then, in the spirit of joy and thanksgiving. Thus shall the accomplishment of the Lord's purpose be helped forward, and His glory manifested.

AUGUST 30.

"*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*"—MATT. xxiii. 38.

THE Lord is found in sorrow over Jerusalem because her house was left desolate. She knew not the time of her visitation. He prophesies of her downfall; but He leaves her not thus. Elsewhere He speaketh comfortable things concerning her. Her very dust is dear. Therefore has He given a charge to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Yea, He has accompanied the charge with a promise and a warning. They shall prosper that love thee; if she is forgotten, wisdom will depart from the hand and the lip. Nay, more, He has given a prayer which never ceases to ascend: "Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion; build Thou the walls of Jerusalem." Instead, therefore, of dwelling upon the evils that have brought punishment upon the Church, let us rather be found appearing before God, in faith and hope, that the days of her sorrow are coming to an end. Let us with heart and mind seek unto the Lord for the perfecting of the strongholds of the spiritual Zion, and the building of the walls of the spiritual Jerusalem. Glorious things are spoken of Zion, and they shall speedily be accomplished.

AUGUST 31.

"Behold, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."
—1 JOHN iv. 11.

THE hand of the faithful Christian is expanded to a love of the brotherhood far beyond the idea of sentiment, or personal pleasing merely, on account of what may naturally produce mutual sympathy. Faith dwells not in the circle of a few. Faith leads us to dwell in the large circle of the brotherhood of the covenant, throughout all ages, and throughout all lands. To the heart filled with faith, the "one another" means, not the acquaintanceship of those who may happen to be near us. The "one another" comprises all the brethren baptized into Christ. The love of Jesus is toward them all, each and every one. And they are those whom each one, in his place, is called upon to love and bless. Love judges them not; love condemns not. Love is ever desiring blessings for all, and deliverance for all, even the unworthy. Remembering Jesus on the accursed tree praying for all, so does love, in the spirit of His disciples, now lead them to be intercessors on behalf of all. The cry of love can never be satisfied till Jesus shall come as the Deliverer of all.

SEPTEMBER 1.

"*We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*"—ROM. xv. 1.

GOD is calling on every man to forget himself, to renounce his own selfishness, to count himself as one who is dead to self, and that, in the renewed life into which he is engrafted, he is to exercise it for the welfare of all. It is possible there may be much trial in the experience of those who enter into this calling, many sorrows, many failings, many discoveries of the vanity of all things, and, above all, of the vanity and deceitfulness of our own hearts. But if we be faithful to this our calling, the end is life, joy, and peace. Would we be prepared to go forth to meet the Lord when He cometh to receive His own unto Himself? Then must we see Him, and meet Him now dwelling in the brethren; we must feel for them, and sympathise with them in their desolation. Let us remember the word of the Lord, "Inasmuch as ye did or did it not to the least of these My brethren, ye did or did it not to Me."

SEPTEMBER 2.

"The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord."
—EXOD. XXXV. 29.

THOUGH wandering in the desert, the children of Israel were by no means destitute of possessions. They carried with them the spoils of Egypt; and when ordered to bring up what was needful to build the tabernacle, they brought much more than enough; indeed, they had to be restrained from bringing. Now God is calling upon us to bring our offerings to Him, that His work may be done. It is true that, like the Israelites, we are in the wilderness of desolation; yet we have much to offer unto the Lord if we only be willing-hearted. Have we not gifts and capacities to serve Him, which lie dormant through reason of worldly ease? Yes; we have a power to work and please Him, which is now crushed within us by our self-will. The Holy Ghost abides in us, and makes us well able, if we yield to His influences, to bring forth fruit unto holiness. Let us therefore arise and dedicate ourselves and all we possess unto God, that we may be instruments in His hands for carrying out His gracious design.

SEPTEMBER 3.

"*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*"—PROV. xviii. 10.

HE is a tower of salvation to His people. He is a rock of strength. He is a shield and buckler—a high tower and a refuge. Such is the character of the God of our salvation, in whose name we are to lift up our banner, and for whose glory we are to war a good warfare. In Him we are safe. He is our habitation and our dwelling-place. We abide in Him. And we may well rest in the promise, "No plague shall come nigh thy dwelling." Filled with love for that name which shelters and preserves us, we are to go forth to vindicate its honour without fear or dismay. Let us seek only the glory of that name, that it may shine forth in all the earth. The multitudes that are against the Lord, the mighty obstacles that the devil, the world, and the flesh raise up, are all as nothing before the power of that name *in* which we abide, and *through* which we have present victory.

SEPTEMBER 4.

"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—ROM. viii. 18.

MANY are the sorrows that afflict the sons of men. The world is full of sorrow. One trouble succeeds another as do the waves of the sea. But as the waves pass away as their strength is exhausted, so shall our troubles come to an end. But our peace shall be everlasting. Let us, amid the sadness that abounds so much in the lot of man, keep alive that hope which rises like a beacon-light in the darkness.

The hope of the coming again of the Lord Jesus to put an end to all sorrow is cheering. Let us never lose sight of it; yea, let us nourish and cherish it. The heart should be disciplined and tutored to keep fast hold of it as a very anchor of rest and safety. Worldly things and feelings are apt to destroy it. Let our hearts be so deeply conscious that nothing short of this can bring full deliverance to the sorrowing and afflicted children of God; that every experience of trouble, and every act of God's goodness, shall only rouse us to cry more earnestly, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

SEPTEMBER 5.

"*Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"—ROM. vi. 11.

THEY who are Christ's have crucified the flesh. The affections and lusts thereof are held as dead. They have no dominion over them. They who are Christ's fulfil not the lust of the flesh. This is not attained by a simple subduing of an evil condition, or the overcoming of an evil nature. Rather is it by the positive and active exercise of another life and spirit working in them. Filled with the Holy Ghost, and walking in the Spirit, there is found no room nor place for the exercise of the lusts of the flesh.

Let us not forget this. We have received that Holy Spirit of promise, whose fruits are so specially enumerated in Scripture. And where the Spirit dwells, there the fruits of the flesh are withered, and the fruits of the Spirit must be in daily and constant activity through a life of watching and prayer. The husbandman is active to overcome the weeds of the field, that his fruit may grow to perfection. So does it become us to bring forth fruit unto perfection.

SEPTEMBER 6.

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son."
—MATT. iii. 17.

TWICE there came a voice from heaven, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son." Once on His baptism; again on His transfiguration. In His baptism He was fulfilling all righteousness; in His transfiguration He was found in prayer. These facts are instructive. We have been brought unto the Lord in baptism, receiving the name of sons, and are therein called to crucify the flesh, and to manifest the life of the Spirit. This is our calling, and the discipline through which we must pass, ere that second voice can come from God acknowledging us as sons indeed, and ready to receive the inheritance.

The very essence of the spiritual life is that it comes *from* God, and ever pours out itself *to* God in faith and prayer that His will may be done, that His end and purpose may be accomplished in us. Only, as we maintain this attitude of soul, may we hope hereafter to be fashioned like unto *His* glorious body, who has passed into that everlasting brightness and purity of which His transfiguration was a foreshowing.

SEPTEMBER 7.

"*The weakness of God is stronger than men.*"—1 COR. i. 25.

THE incarnation of the Son of God is like a sheet-anchor of hope unto the children of God in the midst of all their desolation. Having taken upon Him our humanity, we have herein the pledge that He will carry on that which He has begun until the whole world is reconciled unto Himself.

In the midst, then, of all that now oppresses and opposes us, let us rest in the truth that "God is manifest in flesh," and therefore is well able to deliver, yea, and will deliver.

The little Babe at Bethlehem seemed to the eye of sense wholly unable for the work of delivering creation; so sacraments and ordinances surely seem scanty means to comfort and help God's people. But when He is present, weak things are powerful for mighty ends. The five loaves sufficed to feed the thousands in the wilderness, because of the power of the Lord present with them. Let us not despond, then, but remember that God dwelleth in flesh, and that the Holy Ghost is present in the sacraments and ordinances to convey, through them, the life of Jesus to the soul of man.

SEPTEMBER 8.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"—Ps. cxxxiii. 1.

THE close of the Old Testament Scriptures is very instructive when contrasted with the beginning. We read in the first chapter of Genesis that God looked on the earth, and said it was very good. We read, in the last chapter of Malachi, how He comes to smite that earth with a curse. Alas! what evil and desolation had come in the interval on the sons of men! And we are plainly informed, that if we would escape the things that are coming on the earth, we must needs return to union and fellowship with God and the brethren. Man separated himself from God. He must repent and return to the fear and love of His name. Man separated himself at the beginning from his brother, and the brethren in the Christian Church have fallen out by the way. It behoves us to repent of our separation from one another, to confess it as a sin before God, and to pray to Him to bring us into unity with all the brethren. Let the 133d Psalm be ever in our spirits, and let us cultivate a feeling of humility, catholicity, and charity.

SEPTEMBER 9.

"*Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not.*"—ROM. xii. 14.

HOW touching and generous the devotion of Joseph to his brethren! (Gen. xlv. 5.) What a commentary on our text is the spirit in which Joseph took his wrongs! In all this he was a type of Jesus. For, though Jesus has been cast out and dishonoured by the brethren, His heart is larger still than the heart of Joseph, and He will more and more turn the evil into good, the cursing into blessing. Men still reject Him; but He liveth that He may "preserve the life." And to those who come to Him, He will make Himself known with the tenderest compassion. How instructive is it to individuals suffering wrongs and trials, to bear ever in mind how God would make use of these to turn them into as many blessings! Joseph was persecuted, but cursed not, and God made him a blessing to his brethren. Jesus was persecuted, and cursed not, but seeks to bless all. Let us nourish a godly spirit under all wrongs, that we also may be a blessing unto the brethren.

SEPTEMBER 10.

"*I would have you without carefulness.*"—1 COR. vii. 32.

THIS does not mean carelessness. It is not recklessness. It is not abandoning results to mere accident and blind chance. It is the very opposite. It is acting upon intelligent principle. It is adopting the wisest and surest means of bringing about the most satisfactory ends. We commit all that concerns us into the hands of our Father in heaven, *because* we know, and feel persuaded of it in our hearts, that He hath both the power and the will to order all things in the best way for us. By taking thought, we ourselves cannot add one cubit to our stature, nor make a single hair white or black. What folly, therefore, to burden ourselves with a load of useless anxiety and painful care. Let us not seek to take matters out of the hand of God. Let us not act as though we had no Father in heaven. Blessed be His name, we have a Father in heaven, who is the living God. With the simplicity of a little child, let us commit ourselves, and all that concerns us, into His hands.

SEPTEMBER 11.

"*Elijah requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life.*"—1 KINGS xix. 4.

THE contrast between Elijah standing on Mount Carmel at an altar restored to God's honour, and Elijah an outcast asking God to take away his life, is very instructive. How bold and majestic his position at Carmel! How dejected, forlorn, and feeble his position when he fled to Beersheba! A little meditation on the recorded testimonies of God's servants, shows us how frequent such an experience is. And shall it be otherwise in the latter days? Nay. The more faithful Elijah was, the more he brought upon himself the bitter persecution of the world. The more his soul was fired with zeal for God, the more he was made to feel there was no end to the desolations of Israel. As we observe these truths regarding Elijah, we may derive much comfort and light, not wondering that at one time we are emboldened, at another time dejected and enfeebled.

SEPTEMBER 12.

"*I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.*"—EPH. iv. 1, 2.

WHILE Elijah was in affliction, while in circumstances of bondage and oppression, through reason of his testimony for God, he was tempted to look upon himself as God's only witness. He lacked charity towards his brethren. Let us beware of this snare. God's grace and forbearance are always deeper and greater than outward appearances betoken. To correct this spirit, it will be very profitable to meditate on the example of the apostle Paul. Like Elijah, he was a prisoner in bonds for the Word of God; a prisoner, not merely through the opposition of the world, but from the unfaithfulness of the Church. Yet, behold what a heavenly spirit comes forth from his dungeon! No judgment, no accusation, no grumbling, no harshness, but a holy appeal to the Church to walk in lowliness, and to forbear one another in love, in long-suffering, and meekness, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit. In whatever circumstances we may be placed, let us always embrace, in the arms of charity, all the brethren.

SEPTEMBER 13.

"They, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."—2 COR. x. 12.

IT is not fleshly pride—it is not worldly pride—it is not pride of talent merely that is now lifting up men's hearts. It is spiritual pride that is the greatest evil. It is spiritual pride that is working an uncleanness and deceitfulness, the very opposite of the spirit of the disciple who would serve the Lord, and be in readiness to go forth to meet Him. In these days, men are roused to a spiritual zeal, to a remarkable devotedness to their parties in the Church. Each sect grows in zeal and confidence that its position is the right one; and the spirit it possesses is, thanking God that it is not as others. Now let us see the true condition of heart which we should display. If we would worship God aright, then, unlike the Pharisee of the parable, we must realise that we are as other men—that we are evil as they are. Yea, as we appear before God, we must, because of our sins, and the sins of those with whom we are united as brethren, be prepared to appear as the chiefest of sinners—as not "meet to be called" a Christian.

SEPTEMBER 14.

"*They all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.*"—LUKE xiv. 18.

GOD has given men wives, oxen, and lands, all in order that they may be blessed, and minister a blessing to others. Yet, as we learn from the Gospel, these things are used as reasons why men should not give themselves to God. Men are ensnared by them in these latter days. The servants of the Lord call upon us to come to the Great Supper, for all things are now ready. But men are found so involved, either through domestic ties, business engagements, or social duties, that they cannot obey the summons of the Lord. How is this? Surely there is something far wrong, when the Giver of all the good things and places of this life is not served by us. Men have come to look upon all these places and gifts as mere objects of individual selfishness. Let us beware of being entangled with the cares and duties of this life. They will ever minister to the flesh if we are found preferring them to the invitation of the Lord. May they not thus be snares to us; but, on the contrary, ministering servants, helping us to be ready to go unto the Great Supper of the Lamb.

SEPTEMBER 15.

"God resisteth the proud."—1 PETER v. 5.

GOD resisteth the proud. Let us meditate this solemn word: He *resisteth* the proud. They may plead with Him, and try to do His work, but He will resist them. They may earnestly desire to obtain His counsel in difficulties and perplexities, but He will withhold it. The proud man desires to know God, and to be esteemed as one who is interested in Him, but he mistakes God's way. God gives not practical manifestations of Himself to suit a proud man's purpose. He must take up His abode and dwell in the man, in order to direct the man in the way of peace. This God will not do, save in the lowly and humble heart. Surely we may lay it to heart, that anything like pride or overbearing will make us more and more the objects of God's *resistance*. We may pray, we may worship, we may join in the holy Communion, but still shall we find God resisting every heart that is proud and uplifted. How awful to think that God will at last shut the door upon the proud man, saying, "I know you not!"

SEPTEMBER 16.

"Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock."—LUKE vi. 47, 48.

THE Lord speaks in this passage of a man which built an house and laid the foundation upon a *rock*. He speaks also of a man who without a foundation built an house upon the *earth*. The one house withstood the floods; the other was overwhelmed by them. These bring out the contrast between the man who rests all his faith on Jesus, and the man who places his confidence in the flesh. The first builds upon a rock, and that rock is Christ. He saith, "The Lord is my Rock." To build on Christ is to look to Him for present salvation and blessing. It is also to rest upon Him in the hope of being with Him in His glory. This hope is an anchor of the soul; and whosoever will be able to resist the tide that seeks to overthrow all that is of God, must be found on the Rock and looking for His appearing. He, on the other hand, who places his confidence in the flesh, builds upon earthly hopes and expectations; and being built upon the earth, the tide of lawlessness and godlessness overwhelms him in the flood now overspreading Christendom.

SEPTEMBER 17.

"*And looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.*"—MARK vii. 34.

IT is recorded of Jesus when He unstopped the deaf man's ears that He sighed. The Man who delivered His oppressed brethren was the Man who bore their sorrows, and groaned, being burdened with the weight of their sins. That "sigh" of our Lord over the deaf man was the expression and formed part of that same agony of heart which was only developed in its fulness when, in His agony on the tree, He cried with a loud voice. That "sigh" at the Sea of Galilee spoke of the death which the sins of the spiritually deaf and dumb brought on Him. All the spiritual deliverances we obtain—the opening of our lips, the unstopping of our ears, the unveiling of our eyes, the quickening of our spiritual life—speak to us of the sighs and groans which Jesus endured for the sins that brought on us spiritual dumbness, and darkness, and deafness.

SEPTEMBER 18.

"*Thy faith hath saved thee.*"—LUKE vii. 50.

WE often read of the Lord healing disease and saving from death. We often also read of the Lord saying, "Thy faith hath saved thee." How are these things to be reconciled? Is it faith that saves? or is it the power of the Lord that saves? Is it the stretching out of His hand that delivers? or is it the stretching out of the sinner's faith that delivers? Does virtue go out from the Lord? or does it come forth from the man? Let us see the answer to these important questions. God is all and in all. From Him proceedeth all salvation. Unmoved by the creature, God's love and power flow forth spontaneously from Him upon us. It is an attribute of His very being to put forth salvation and health and peace. Let us not hesitate, then, to recognise God as the *only* Source of all good. Let us not fail to ascribe to Him all the glory and the honour of our salvation. We must humble ourselves, and feel that we are nothing, so that all the praise may be to His name.

SEPTEMBER 19.

"Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."—MATT. xxiv. 44.

THE test of faithfulness is when we are like unto men looking out for the appearing of the Lord. The test of unfaithfulness is when we say, "My Lord delayeth His coming." The faithful steward says, "He comes quickly;" the unfaithful says, He delays it—nay, he argues the matter, saying, "Where is the promise of it?" The one condition of heart produces great penitence and lowliness, because of our shortcomings and want of readiness to meet the Lord; the other condition of heart is accompanied with a vain boasting satisfaction in the present condition of things, and with no looking out for a better hope. Again, the one condition of heart separates from all the seducing influence of the world, and leads us to purify ourselves as Christ is pure; the other condition of heart is represented as eating and drinking with the drunken, or entering into the spirit and excitement of this life.

O Lord, establish us among Thy faithful ones, who ever look for Thee!

SEPTEMBER 20.

"*Thy faith hath saved thee.*"—LUKE vii. 50.

WE meditated lately upon the truth that salvation is altogether from God alone. But Holy Scripture seems to make something in man himself the source of salvation when it is said, "Thy faith hath saved thee." The explanation of this apparent difference is, that man has been so constituted that God can do no good thing to him if the man himself does not put forth a hearty effort to receive it. Unless he puts forth an effort of faith towards God he cannot be healed or enlightened or guided. In this we have the secret of the creature's failure to experience or enjoy the salvation of God. Salvation is God's gift. Faith is the hand which man may or may not stretch out to receive it. It is important to observe the bearing of this truth on the grace of God in sacraments. God is present in every sacramental act. He is verily present in His power to bless, whether our faith recognise Him and accept the blessing or not. But, unless we stretch out the hand of faith, we shall not receive the blessing which God is present to bestow. This, indeed, is a very solemn and searching truth.

SEPTEMBER 21.

"He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust."—Ps. xci. 4.

WHEN a storm is coming the hen scrapes with her feet; the chickens gather under her wing. Instinct teaches them to do this. Scripture speaks of beasts being wiser than men. The ox knoweth his owner, but His people know not the Lord. Now, ere the storm of the last and terrible days burst over Christendom, the Lord beseecheth men by His servants to come under His protection, that He may cover them with His feathers, and that under His wings they may trust. In many ways God gives us warnings of the things that are coming on the earth—by the quickening of His Holy Spirit, by the awfulness of calamities, by the shaking of men's confidences, and the failing of their hearts for fear. Alas! in spite of all this, men seem to become more lawless and self-willed.

Behold, the day of the Lord is at hand, and who shall be able to stand it? They who in humility of heart renounce all self-confidence, and come to Jesus for shelter and cleansing.

SEPTEMBER 22.

"*He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*"—ROM. viii. 32.

IT is wonderful to reflect that God is *longing* to deliver us. He is waiting to be gracious. His ardent desire is to bless and relieve His children. What stronger witness of this can we have than in the broken Body and shed Blood of His Son? What does the death of Christ shew forth? Oh, marks it not the Lord's intense desire to reach men with blessings,—to save and deliver them! What more could He do? What further effort or struggle could He make? Looking thus at the earnestness of God on our behalf, let us ask, Is there a putting forth of earnestness corresponding to this on our part? Is there any struggle or effort of faith to lay hold of salvation? Is there strong crying, and tears? Is there anything of deep, fervent, longing after Him? Alas! instead of the fight of faith, is there not amongst us too much of an easy kind of acquiescence? God is very earnest for our deliverance. Why should we remain callous, and not put forth an agony of faith to receive Him?

SEPTEMBER 23.

"I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."
—LUKE vii. 9.

IT is edifying to observe how often the record of the acts of our Saviour's deliverance brings forth extraordinary efforts of faith on the part of the people to obtain deliverance from Him. Take, for example, the woman of Canaan, whose faith struggled against difficulties until she obtained the victory. Again, take the case of the exertion made by the friends of the palsied man to let him down to Jesus through the roof. Again, take the case of the centurion, asking only the utterance of a word; or the case of the woman whose faith led her to touch the hem of the Saviour's garment, that she might be healed. Now, these cases stand as a witness of the condition of heart which should ever be present with us. We must have strong faith in order to prevail with God, even through great difficulties, yea, even through apparently insurmountable obstacles. The victory is to faith; but it is to faith which cleaves with tenacious hold to Christ.

SEPTEMBER 24.

"*He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.*"—ACTS xvii. 26.

THE position which God has given to each man is one of great responsibility. He has set each man in his place, in order that by him His purposes may be fulfilled, and the glory of God manifested. We are not set in our places for the purpose of serving or honouring ourselves, but that, through us, the Lord's will may be accomplished, and His work carried forward. This is what God asks us to do; and holiness consists in our responding to the call of God. God has made us and set us apart for a holy purpose. Are we holy? Are we living holy lives? Are we responding to God, and fulfilling, in the places where He has set us, the purpose of God? This is what we mean when we speak of *responsibility*. It is that men should fulfil what God has declared as His purpose. Failing to do this, a man may be doing a thousand other things, but he is not serving and honouring God, and is therefore necessarily coming short of God's salvation. Let us seek to glorify God, and finish the work He has given *us* to do.

SEPTEMBER 25.

"He, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?"—LUKE x. 29.

IN answering the question, "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus spoke not for the benefit of the individual only who addressed Him, but for the benefit of all devoted and religious persons to the end of the age. The snare in the path of the lawyer was spiritual pride, the feeling of the superiority of his character to that of others. Jesus, by this parable, proved him whether he had humility enough to turn out of his way on behalf of an oppressed and forsaken man; whether he was willing to claim as his neighbour one who had fallen among thieves. There is a lesson here for us. Many who, like us, have been baptized into the Body of Christ, have fallen among thieves, been robbed of nearly every excellence, and their spiritual life is well-nigh gone. Now, what are our feelings towards the brethren in error? Are we looking upon them as too vile for burden-bearing? Are we casting them out, as not in the brotherhood? Oh, let us remember there can be no true unity or neighbourhood if it be only among those who are good, or of a like mind with ourselves.

SEPTEMBER 26.

"*Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.*"—Ps. xxxviii. 4.

JESUS was found, in the days of His ministry, unattached to any section of the Jews. He was bound up with the brotherhood of the nation. For better, for worse, His lot was cast in with the covenanted people. Was there good among them? Then would He rejoice in the good. Was there evil among them? Then He would confess it before the Father; He would bear it on His heart as His own. His brotherhood and alliance with them were genuine. They were manifested, not in negative, but positive outgoings in acts of love. His feeling of unity with the brotherhood went so far as to lead Him to speak (as in the Psalms) unto His Father as one laden with evil, as one whose iniquities were gone over His head; yea, it led Him to lay down His life for them as a sacrifice. Such is the example set before us. Unity never can be known or realised, except on this principle. We are not attaining to the spirit of Jesus, unless we feel that we are united in the common brotherhood, even with those who are evil: and that, because of our union with them, their sins, in a sense, are our sins. We are to confess these sins; yea, we are to lay down our lives for the brethren.

SEPTEMBER 27.

"*They shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.*"—MATT. i. 23.

IT is sad to think how small a hold the fact of the presence of God in our flesh has over men's minds. How little is the joy and peace which we derive from such a name as "Emmanuel," "God with us!" How strong would we be for labour were our hearts quickened in the faith, that wherever we go God is with us, to fulfil His gracious pleasure by us! How the realising of this would carry us through innumerable trials, with a calmness and dignity such as we know not now! We know of the safe passage of men through most pestilential scenes, sustained by their own boldness and vigour of mind. How much more safely would we pass through all the scenes of evil and temptation, were our hearts more confident in the assurance that Jesus is verily "Emmanuel, God with us." "God with us," at all times and under all circumstances. "God with us," when He is as one who is silent, and trying the patience of His people. "God with us," when He is no more keeping silence, but speaking to instruct, to warn, to counsel, to comfort us. O my soul, exalt the faithful Lord, the Emmanuel, "God with us!"

SEPTEMBER 28.

"Seeing that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."—HEB. iv. 14.

THE eye of faith must constantly rest upon the sacred presence of Jesus as He now appears in heaven on our behalf. To do this, implies also a determined refusal to fix the faith upon aught but the Lord enthroned within the holiest; and oh, as the heart becomes filled with the sense of His presence and of our union with Him, how we become uplifted above the earth!—how upborne above all selfishness! O my soul, suffer none of the fleeting prejudices, passions, and opinions that assail thee to turn away thy heart from looking within the veil! Be patient, be enduring. Bide but a little while, and whatever shadows or darkness now hide the glory of Jesus will dissolve away. The faithful mariner never ceases to gaze upon the spot where the light is placed. Amid the darkness and heaviness, then, that are thy portion now, keep thy gaze fixed on Jesus. Weary not, faint not, and you shall soon be gladdened with the presence of the Lord when He appeareth in His glory.

SEPTEMBER 29.

"*They returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom.*"—LUKE ii. 39, 40.

THE mother of Jesus brought Him, when He was a little child, and dedicated Him to God in the temple at Jerusalem. Let us remember what followed this solemn act. He left the temple, as He had entered it, carried by His mother. God had looked upon Him, and was well pleased. Where can this highly-favoured Child be going? What can He be about to do? Where does His mother carry Him? To the market-place? to the crowded resorts of the city? Oh, no! That Child, whom you have seen in the temple, leaves the city. That humble mother is carrying Him away into the retirement of Galilee, to the village of Nazareth, to the humble roof of Joseph the carpenter. There this Child is to abide for many days, learning obedience to those Himself had made. What lessons we may learn from all this! We glory because we are dedicated to God. But where are we to prove that we have the spirit of a child of God? Oh, is it not in learning discipline and obedience at home, and in all the institutions of God?

SEPTEMBER 30.

"Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, That Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."—LUKE xii. 27.

THERE is something very searching in the appeal made by the Lord to the beauty of the lilies, which neither toil nor spin. This beauty they attain through the provision of nature—by a submissive obedience to its laws. This they do without any carefulness on their part. The dew, the heat, the air will, as a matter of course, draw forth their beauty. And are not the children of God God's husbandry, God's planting? Are they not partakers of that seed of eternal life which He has sown in them? Is it not in their very spiritual being to grow up as plants of the Lord, full of beauty and renown? What, then, hinders them? Disobedience and unbelief, self-will, and pride. It is these which hinder. The lily is obedient to the law of its nature; but the Christian plant submits not to the laws and ordinances of grace. Oh, let us yield up our will, not doubting that, as He has planted us children of the resurrection, so He will also take care of that resurrection-life as we walk in obedience to His most blessed will.

OCTOBER 1.

"And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."—2 KINGS vi. 16, 17.

PRESENCE of mind is a noble quality. It is a fruit of a well-disciplined mind. In times of danger it is the means of saving many. It carries one through duty and circumstances of great difficulty. It is most especially needed by us in our Christian calling, surrounded as we are by cunning and deceitful foes. Were we abiding in God, as in a strong tower, we would be much more bold to lead His enemies captive than be led captive by them. The history of Elisha teaches us a lesson in this. He was encompassed by the Syrians in Dothan; yet how calm his mind—how bold his faith: "Though an host should encompass against me, yet will I not fear." There was a great host, unseen of men, around him. And is it not so with every one who stands as a witness for God? Yet why should we fear? The Lord encompasseth them round about that fear Him. Are there not angels ministering round the heirs of salvation? Are we not shielded by the Saviour's intercessions? Let us be bold, then, in faith. Let us be full of presence of mind. Let us maintain our composure amid difficulties exceeding great. Victory shall be ours through the conquering Redeemer.

OCTOBER 2.

"*Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold,*" &c.—1 CHRON. xxii. 14.

UNTIL the day when Jesus shall appear, there will be no rest in that spiritual warfare which we must accomplish. It was in the midst of many wars and fightings that David gathered materials to build the house of the Lord; and it is in the midst of struggle and temptation that the precious vessels are prepared which shall adorn the New Jerusalem. It is often turbulent and roaring waters that polish and smooth the stones. Thus all outward opposition and trial prove to the children of God seasons of great preparation for the future glory. David could prepare, but he could not build the house for God. There was a son promised him "who should be a man of rest," and to whom it should appertain to build the house. We look for the coming again of the Lord, who will introduce the reign of peace, and set forth the glory of the Lord in the land of the living. We wait for the appearing of Jesus, the true "Man of rest." Then we shall have rest from all our enemies, death and the grave shall be overcome, and we shall be set as polished and living stones in the glorious temple above.

OCTOBER 3.

"*Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me.*"—MATT. xix. 21.

AFTER our Lord had, in a parable, promised the coming of the Son of man to avenge the elect, the case of a certain ruler is recorded, to whom is announced the necessity of leaving all for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Such a condition of spirit is essential to those who would wait for the Lord from heaven. The power of this hope is such as to lead us to sit loose to all earthly things. We would lay all we have at the feet of Jesus for His glory. How can we wait for the Lord, and say, "Come," if the heart is satisfied with present things? It is the heart emptied of all confidence in them that is ready to receive Him. That which constitutes a readiness to receive Him at His second advent is our preparation to be satisfied with *spiritual* riches. When a man is surfeited with food he is inactive—unfit for exertion; so if we be surfeited with the things of this life, we shall be unfitted to run the race set before us. Alas! we know not how much the Lord's work may be hindered, and ourselves injured, by our love of earthly things crushing out our desire and longing for the spiritual riches of the kingdom of heaven.

OCTOBER 4.

"I have glorified Thee."—JOHN xvii. 4.

THESE words were spoken by our Saviour near the close of His earthly career. He is looking at, as it were, and reviewing the character of His whole past life. And in the words before us He shows us what was the grand aim and end of all His work. It was to show forth the glory of His heavenly Father. Man was made in the image of God, that, in humanity, the glory of God might be manifested. "Man's chief end is to glorify God." But man failed to fulfil the purpose of his being. Christ, however, when He assumed our nature, brought to pass the design of God, that in humanity His glory should be shown forth. Therefore He was able to say, "I have glorified Thee." In all this, Christ has set before us what must be the law of our being—what the aim and purpose of all our actions. The admonition is, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." It was pride, and a desire to follow the leading of his own will, which caused Adam to fall away from his high calling—of glorifying God. Let us beware lest we be hindered by a like spirit. Oh to have more of the mind of Christ! He said, "Not my will, but Thine be done: I delight to do Thy will, O God."

OCTOBER 5.

"*I have glorified Thee* on the earth."—JOHN xvii. 4.

IT was by obedience to the law of His being that Christ was enabled to glorify God; and it is only as we are obedient to the law of that spiritual nature of which we are made partakers in Christ, that we can be in God's hands as instruments to be used by Him for His glory.

Let us meditate further the important truth—that it was "*on the earth*" that Christ glorified God. The earth was made to be the scene for the display of the divine glory; but it was "*on the earth*" that Satan set God's glory at nought, and trampled on it. Christ came to the spot in creation where God had been dishonoured, and His purpose hindered; and on the very battle-field where the enemy had gained his victory is that enemy conquered. Thus God's purpose is fulfilled in Christ, that by man, and "*on the earth*," His glory should be displayed. *Here* also *we* are to glorify God. Then, when Christ cometh, shall we and the whole earth be filled with His glory; for Satan shall be wholly cast out from the earth, the curse shall be removed, and God's will shall be done here as in heaven.

OCTOBER 6.

"*I have glorified Thee on the earth:* I have finished the work."
—JOHN xvii. 4.

OUR blessed Saviour not only tells us, that the aim and purpose of all His life was to glorify God, but that He had *finished His work.* Ere He entered upon that work, He knew its character, its extent, its difficulty, its importance, and the mighty consequences that depended upon it. He knew also the stern opposition with which He should be assailed by the devil and wicked men, in order to hinder the work. He knew that His work would carry Him into the lowest depths of humiliation, shame, and suffering. He knew that, as the representative of fallen humanity, He would endure the load of a world's sins, and undergo the wrath of divine justice; yea, that He would suffer the hidings of His Father's face. But, though all this lay before Him in vision, He staggered not. He shrunk not from enduring the cross—the heavy cross laid upon Him. And now at the end of His course He says, "I have *finished* the work." It was done; yea, it was *well* done; it was in every respect a perfect work. Alas, our works are like broken columns. We *begin*, but we *finish* not. We purpose, but we perform not.

OCTOBER 7.

"*I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work* Thou gavest me to do."—JOHN xvii. 4.

"MAN'S chief end is to glorify God." In no way could man fulfil the purpose of his being except by undoubting faith in God, and by hearty obedience to His will. Man was disobedient. He preferred His own will to the will of God. And, from Adam downwards, there has appeared no son of man who hath rendered unto God the whole burnt-offering of a pure and obedient life, save Jesus of Nazareth. He ever proved Himself to be of a submissive spirit. He was ever in the hands of His Father as a dutiful and obedient child. The expression of His heart and life always was, "Lo I come! I delight to do Thy will, O my God." "I must work the work of Him that sent Me." "Not my will, but Thine be done."

Thus we learn that the work which Christ did was the very work which His heavenly Father laid before Him to do. It is essential to all acceptable obedience, that it be not self-devised and self-originated, but that it be in conformity with the will of God. It is not *any* work, even though it be so-called religious work, that is well-pleasing to God. It must be the work given us to do.

OCTOBER 8.

"*I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work* Thou gavest me to do."—JOHN xvii. 4.

"THE work Thou gavest me to do." Ah! here lies our obligation to work for God. He has placed us in our present sphere of duty; and we dare not quit it. He chose it for us; even He who chooses everything for His people: their duties, their trials, their relationships. And God having thus given us a work to do, it is our duty by God's grace to do it. No fear of man, no love of ease, no allurements of sense, must turn us from it. It is a solemn and glorious thing to feel that we have a mission from Heaven. We have each a work to do, and that not man's work, which is ever a poor, contemptible, thankless one: but God's work, which is ever a glorious, a delightful work. We have all this high calling, this heavenly mission, this divine work. How few of us feel this solemn truth! How few of us rise up to the elevation of this sentiment! Hear what Christ says on this point: "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Amazing truth! Our mission, our work—the same as His—*to glorify the Father.* Here is an object worth living for!—the glory of God! To realise this is the awakening of a new existence,—the bursting forth of new energies. O my soul, look to Jesus as the Pattern, and He will strengthen you to follow His example.

OCTOBER 9.

"It shall be, when thou shalt hear a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt go out to battle."—1 CHRON. xiv. 15.

DAVID was charged of God to go up against the Philistines. David was charged a second time *not* to go up, but turn away, and observe when there should be a sounding in the tops of the mulberry trees. In the first charge, David went forth in the fulness of his strength. In the second charge, he was cast into circumstances of dependence upon the leadings of God's providence. In these two circumstances, we have set forth the true condition of those who would fight the Lord's battle. There must be great personal bravery and courage against the enemies, and yet a consciousness that these are useful only when put forth at the time and under the guidance of God's hand. Doubtless it was a trial to David to turn away from God's enemies, and be made to wait for such a thing as the sounding on the tops of the mulberry trees. But he was obedient; he was proved; He showed that his reliance was not upon the force of arms, but on the direction of the Almighty. It was a privilege to David to be thus made to watch for God. So is it for us a high privilege to be in circumstances where we are obliged to hang on God in prayer and faith, until He open up a way for us. Our zeal and bravery are nothing, we are helpless, till God move and open the door.

OCTOBER 10.

"One of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him," &c.—REV. vii. 13–17.

WHOEVER these glorified ones may be, their circumstances are all that the most ardent can desire. They have *no wants*. There exists a perfect harmony between them and the sphere in which they are placed. Thus, the cravings of want and the longing of unsatisfied desires are impossible. In the uncontrolled possession and enjoyment of the objects which they love, they are supremely blessed. They are led to the Source, boundless, undiminishable, and underived, of celestial happiness; to fountains of living waters, sparkling, pure, and ever-satisfying. They are exposed to *no wants*. If heaven might be symbolised by one word, that word would be, *a smile*—the smile of holiest, serenest joy. If earth might be symbolised by one word, that word would be, *a tear*. In heaven, a tear is never shed. There, nothing intervenes between affection and its object, or mars the eternal repose.

Oh, what a contrast there is between this glorious state and the condition in which we are, in this, the time of our pilgrimage. The heart is often unsatisfied and restless, and sorrows lie heavily upon us. But let us lift up the eye of faith, and take courage. The Lord is at hand!

OCTOBER 11.

"*One of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him,*" &c.—REV. vii. 13–17.

WHEN St Paul contrasted his present with his future condition, he exclaimed, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." And who can study the glowing picture set before us by St John, in the text of our yesterday's meditation, without responding, "Amen!" to the saying of the great apostle of the Gentiles? Let us further meditate, this morning, on the character of the glory revealed in the inhabitants of heaven. They are assailed by *no enemy*. From every foe, the white-robed multitude are free. No storm shall ever rudely disturb the calm of that eternal day. No tempest shall ever impede or agitate the placid flow of the river of life. The sun shall not smite them by day, nor the moon by night.

Whose is this blessedness and glory? Theirs who on earth suffered for and with Christ. What is their title to this glory? The only title to heaven is, that we be clothed with white robes, robes made white in the blood of the Lamb. Oh, the glory of those who belong to this great multitude! They stand before the throne and before the Lamb. They serve Him day and night in His temple. Their devotion is intensified and exalted by the very presence of God. They are for ever with the Lord.

OCTOBER 12.

"*She went and did according to the word of Elijah. . . . . The woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.*"—1 KINGS xvii. 15, 24.

THAT act of faith and obedience which marked the widow of Sarepta was held in high honour. She reaped a great reward. She was blessed in her deed. But she needed something yet more to cleanse her heart. She had saved the prophet's life, and thus honoured God in His servant. And now she is visited with the death of her own son. What a trial of faith! We might imagine her saying, "Surely I least deserved this of all the widows of Israel." She knew not yet the plague of her heart. She had enjoyed much prosperity at the hand of the Lord, through the prophet. She suffers now. Her son dies. Her peace is disturbed. Yet, behold, *then* there came her true honouring. The prophet raises up her child, and delivers him to his mother. And her confession proves, that not until her heart had been thus searched, did she really know the cleansing power of the word of God. How full of meditation is this for us in the midst of our trials! How full of comfort, to hope that the end of our sorrows and disappointments will be a far more unfeigned submission of ourselves to the will of God!

OCTOBER 13.

"*He rose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God.*"
—1 KINGS xix. 8.

ELIJAH had borne a very remarkable testimony for God in the land of Israel. But it appears he was very desponding. He saw nothing but evil. He felt as if he stood alone. And we find him, in the bitterness of his heart, wandering an outcast in the wilderness. There God meets him. There He spreads a table for him. There bread comes down from heaven. By it the prophet of God is sustained, and in the strength of it he goes forward to Horeb. Let us meditate this, as it bears upon the testimony we have to deliver for God in the present days. God gives to us the true bread from heaven. He gives unto us to feed upon the Body and Blood of His Son, that we may be strengthened to bear witness for Him. Sustained by this provision, we are able ever to ascend the Hill of God, and wait there for the appearing of Jesus. His flesh is our meat indeed, and His Blood is our drink indeed. Just as Elijah had no sustaining food but that which the angels showed him, so have we no sustenance save the bread which cometh down from heaven. By it, however, we are strengthened for the work committed to us.

OCTOBER 14.

"*The king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing.*"—2 SAM. xxiv. 24.

THE rivalry between Araunah and David as to the ground on which the altar was to be raised, is very instructive. The soul of both overflowed with zeal to give unto the Lord. The desire of both was kingly. It is said, "All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king." Doubtless Araunah's desire was accepted in the sight of God as the offering of a willing heart.

Again, how noble was David's reasoning! He would not offer burnt-offerings of that which cost him nothing. He must make a sacrifice. He knew there was no offering, save at a cost. Now we are called upon to offer unto God an acceptable service, and to devote ourselves to the showing forth of His glory. If Araunah, with a kingly heart, made such an offering as he did, how much more devoted and enlarged ought we to be, who are kings and priests to God! If David, who knew God only through the types and ceremonies of a fleshly dispensation, would not offer what cost him nothing, how much more may we, who know Him through the gift of the Holy Ghost, give liberally and largely to His service, that His glory may be established!

OCTOBER 15.

"*Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,*" &c.
—HEB. xi. 33, 34.

WHAT is needed among the many faithful people of the Lord is an assurance and confidence in their position before God and man. From what does this want of confidence proceed? Is it from *uncleanness?* or is it from *sensitiveness* of conscience? Is it from a wavering of faith in the all-sufficiency of the Blood of the Lamb? Is it from the undue influence which worldly things and prospects exercise over the heart? From whatever cause, surely this timidity of faith is one great cause why the enemy prevails so much in the Church of God. It is not different in the Church from what it is in the world. Where there is bravery of spirit in the army, it will not allow the adversaries of the king to prevail; or, if they have prevailed, will give them no rest until they are cast out. We are called to walk in the way of the Lord, and to stand up with all boldness against that spirit of infidelity, now, alas! so prevalent in Christendom, which, for the counsel of God, would substitute the reasoning of man. Let us with childlike confidence keep God's counsel, and God will strengthen us to prevail against His and our enemies.

OCTOBER 16.

Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."—1 JOHN iii. 3.

WHAT do we, who are in a world of defilement, more need than to be purified? What does the soul, awakened to a sense of its union with Christ, desire so much as to be purified? He has met that need and that desire, by giving to us a hope, abiding in which we shall be purified, even as He is pure. That hope is the hope of His appearing. It is an utter vanity to imagine that we can ever be purified in any other than in that way, and by those means which God has appointed. It is not our life only which needs this purifying. It is our faith also. How can we hold fast sound doctrine if we let go this hope? Our faith depends on our abiding in it, since it is only as we are kept in steadfast expectation of seeing Jesus again, that we are constrained to fix our whole thought upon the Lamb of God. Thus we are purified in our faith. As sinful creatures, our confidence is in the work of Jesus as our only acceptance; and we are saved from the most unwholesome condition of looking within ourselves for any ground of confidence or comfort.

OCTOBER 17.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion."—Ps. cxxxiii. 1, 3.

THERE can be no doubt that all creation is to be looked upon as a revelation of God's wisdom, power, goodness, and purpose. To a large extent, however, it is to us at present a sealed book, so that we cannot read fully the divine meaning contained in it. In the time of the future glory, when we shall be admitted to a more perfect acquaintance with God's works and ways, when "we shall know even as we are known," then will it be made abundantly manifest, that the God of creation is the God of redemption; or, in other words, that the visible creation is an impression or mould of the invisible, appointed to disclose the heavenly things of God to us. Even now, however, we may, by reverent study of God's Word and works, be enabled, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to learn valuable lessons "of the invisible things of God from the creation of the world."

In this way, let our meditations for a few mornings be directed to the lessons contained in the scriptural comparison of brotherly love to the *dew*, God's effectual provision for the refreshment of vegetation. It is an emblem of a provision yet more precious, for the consolation and well-being of the children of God, amid their cares, sorrows, and calamities.

OCTOBER 18.

"*As the dew of Hermon.*"—Ps. cxxxiii. 3.

THE sun, as it shines on the various substances on the earth's surface, communicates to them a measure of heat, which they receive and retain according to their different qualities. The Sun of Righteousness shining upon us, communicates spiritual light and heat in such various degrees as we are fitted to receive of His grace; for "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." In the economy of nature, there could be no dew unless the sun first imparted warmth to the different substances on the earth; for it is only when these substances send forth heat that dew is formed, to refresh the grass of the field. In the kingdom of grace, there could be no real brotherly love, unless Jesus shed abroad in our hearts the love of God. Our hearts must first glow with communications of love direct from the heart of Jesus, ere we can have affections going forth to bless, and cheer, and help our fellow-Christians. We only give what we first receive; we pour out what hath first been poured in. How important then that we live ever in fellowship with Jesus, and open our hearts to receive yet larger communications of His grace. If we close our hearts towards Him, we close them also towards His brethren.

OCTOBER 19.

"*As the dew of Hermon.*"—Ps. cxxxiii. 3.

ALL bodies on the earth's surface send forth the rays of heat they receive from the sun—every warmer body to every colder. This provision sets forth, in its spiritual meaning, the law of distribution which God has ordained in the Church—viz., that every member shall, in the power of the Holy Ghost, use, for the blessing of all the brethren, whatever grace he has received from the Lord Jesus. We are all members one of another, and, if faithful to our calling, shall delight to distribute to the necessities of all; and thus the needy members shall receive from the more full, and the wants of all shall be supplied. Acting in accordance with this law, it will come to pass that no member, abiding in the fellowship of Christ, will live unto himself, but will radiate of his warmth to all around. Thus, whatever coldness there may be in any of the brethren will be corrected by the instrumentality of those who are more filled with the warmth of spiritual life. For whatever lethargy or chill there may be in any heart, God would have it put away by the immediate administration to it of the genial health around. Thus it will come to pass that if "one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

OCTOBER 20.

"*As the dew of Hermon.*"—Ps. cxxxiii. 3.

THE different substances on the earth not only send out rays of heat to each other, but the entire surface is itself continually sending its rays upward through the clear air into space. As the surface of the earth thus cools, the air in contact cools also, and thus loses a portion of the watery vapour it has hitherto retained. This vapour descends on every leaflet, and suspends itself from every blade of grass, in drops of pearly dew.

Let us now consider the spiritual teaching of this, in reference to brotherly love. The heat descends through space to the earth, and is again from the earth sent upwards into space. Thus blessed and invigorated by the shining of God's countenance upon us, our souls are more and more drawn towards God Himself in love and gratitude. "We love Him because He first loved us." We honour and worship Him with joy and thanksgiving. In proportion as we are warmed and quickened by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, will be the fulness of our upward offerings of worship and praise. Upwards unto God do these offerings go, and He loves to receive them. Into His presence are they brought by our exalted Brother and High Priest, and the savour of His merits is their sweetness to the Father.

OCTOBER 21.

"*As the dew of Herm*[redacted]" Ps. cxxxiii. 3.

THE offering of our worship and praise are accepted in the presence of God through Jesus Christ. But there they do not remain. God has a further operation of grace to accomplish with the offerings of man's love. As the natural heat is changed in its ascent, and descends in a new form of excellent blessing, giving refreshment to every creature around, so does God with the offerings of His children, and especially with their prayers for one another. Being sanctified in His presence, He sends, as it were, our offerings back again in the form of *brotherly love*, which rests upon all around as a refreshment from the Most High. Thus our love to God becomes refreshment unto man; every particle of it returns, not on ourselves merely, but on all the brethren. And in proportion to the upward goings of this tribute of man to God, will be the return of a corresponding blessing from God to man. Thus we see how the creature must be a fellow-worker with the Creator. Man cannot go forth in the spirit of brotherly love to bless those around him, except that, first of all, he offer the tribute of his love to God. Oh, let our hearts be ever open, that they may not only receive love from God, but that there should go forth the tribute of our love towards God.

OCTOBER 22.

"*As the dew of Hermon.*"—Ps. cxxxiii. 3.

A CLEAR heaven is required for the free ascent of heat from the ground, and for the full deposit of dew upon its surface. We are taught herein the necessity of unrestricted access to God—unrestricted by anything in heaven, where He is, or in the earth, where we are. If the disease of the soul remain unhealed, the return of true worship and of a child's duty towards Him as a Father, cannot take place. All obstructions arising from God's wrath against sins which we have done are removed by the shedding of the blood of Jesus; but the obstruction caused by our unbelief is ever, alas! in the way, leaving our hearts cold and joyless, quenching our offerings of peace and joy, and hindering the outflowing of brotherly love. For there can be no spiritual dew where there is no joy in God, through Jesus Christ—no true brotherly love—no bowels of mercy—no refreshment of weary man—no pleasing of God, whose love is said to be *fulfilled* in us when we love one another. There can be no enjoyment of God or fulfilment of our duty to man, except we have free access to God, through faith in the blood of Christ, and through our abiding in the sprinkling thereof.

OCTOBER 23.

"*As the dew of Hermon.*"—Ps. cxxxiii. 3.

THE almost infinite minuteness of the drop of vapour forming the dew, reminds us of the excellent fineness of many of the ministrations of brotherly love, and of the most sweet tenderness of its effusions. Witness the pleading of Judah for his brother Benjamin; the melting of the heart of Joseph, the seemingly inexorable judge; witness the love of Jonathan and David to one another; witness the Lord's weeping sympathy with the sisters of Lazarus; His shielding the repentant woman; His sparing and restoring message to Peter, who had denied Him. It is of God this brotherly love. And oh! He, the mightiest, the most awful, supreme in dignity, majesty, and power, is the most gentle! It is of God this brotherly love, and therefore it is most pure, most gentle, most sweet, most refreshing, most blessed, most divine. Surely it is the bearing forth upon our brother man of the heart of Him who is indeed also our Brother. Shall we think it a strange thing that *we* should partake of *His* love, and bear forth to others what is in His heart? It is because He has taken us into union with Himself, and made us partakers of His very life and nature.

OCTOBER 24.

"*As the dew of Hermon.*"—Ps. cxxxiii. 3.

WHEN the dew is falling every green leaf drinks in the descending moisture, while the naked land and the barren highway are still unconscious of its fall. Here we are reminded of the sad and bitter consequences of hardness of heart towards God. There are those who despise His goodness so totally, whose hearts become so hardened by wicked works, that they receive no refreshment from brotherly love. The provision made for all by the All-Bountiful is of no avail to them; "for the way of transgressors is hard," and "there is no peace to the wicked."

Finally. Grand and glorious is the reflection of the rays of the sun from the drops of dew. How is the soul of man ravished with their beauty, as he steps forth in the joy of the morning, and beholds their sparkling brightness! And do they not herein tell of the beauty of the regenerate life, filled with the Holy Ghost; of the acceptableness to the Father of the fruits of His Son's Passion? He beholds man shining with the reflection of His Son's glory, shedding forth before Him the various hues of Faith, Hope, and Charity!

OCTOBER 25.

"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."—LUKE ix. 62.

HAVING put the hand to the plough, no man can *look* back, far less *go* back, and enter the kingdom of heaven. No man can look backward and forward. We must always look forward. St Paul, the first of the apostles in zeal, was always looking forward. The ploughman is always looking forward, not only to do his work well and keep his furrow even, but to the seed-time and harvest that shall follow, as matters of certainty, though they be unseen. He is not frightened by the intervening storms, but overleaps them all in the confident hope of reaping. So with us, in all our work we must aye be looking forward—never behind—setting our hearts on the glory of the end. And should untoward and dark storms meanwhile arise, we think not of those things which intervene, but of that certain Hope soon to be revealed. We have put our hand to the plough, and cannot look back.

OCTOBER 26.

"He came and touched the bier; and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, arise."—LUKE vii. 14.

JESUS meets a funeral procession at the gate of the city of Nain. The son of a widow is being carried to his burial. At the sight of her the compassionate heart of the Saviour is touched. He says, "Weep not." His word of comfort is followed by His gracious act. He restores her son from the dead. On another occasion He stood by those that mourned and said, "I am the resurrection and the life." And here, again, His word of comfort is followed by His gracious act. He raises Lazarus from the dead. And surely it becomes us to rejoice with great joy that He is still present with us, Who hath the power to deliver all the captives. We rejoice that He is raised from the dead, and dieth no more. We rejoice that we are raised with Him. "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye also are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised him from the dead." Having received from Him this resurrection life, He looks for manifestations of that life and power in us. Oh, let us stir up our faith that we are verily one with Him Who is the Resurrection and the Life, for it is in the strength thereof that we can alone work the work of God.

OCTOBER 27.

"*Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.*"—COL. iv. 2.

WHEN it pleases God to take, as it were, a fresh step in the carrying out of His purpose, His character shines out brighter and brighter. Every fresh act of God in His working increases more and more our responsibility; it causes also the wrath of the enemy to wax stronger and stronger. There is always much which is attractive to His people in any work of the Lord. It interests for the time. But the reality of faith in it *as the Lord's work* remains to be proved. For when it is known and received as His, it will be followed by earnest prayer. Without prayer no increase can come; and better for those amongst whom He works that He had never worked, than that they should allow His work to be frustrated by the wiles of the world, the devil, or the flesh. Let us see to it that the work of the Lord *be done*. If we know the will of God, let us, at all hazards, see that it is accomplished. How can we do this? By prayer, urgent prayer. It is as difficult to persevere in prayer, in secret prayer, as it is to do any work for God. Do we see God's work neglected? Then there is a voice whispering to us, "Prayer is neglected." Do we hear men saying, "Oh, it is disheartening?" Then do we hear them virtually proclaiming, "We are not praying."

OCTOBER 28.

"*He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth.*"—ISA. liii. 7.

CORRECT views of the passion of our Lord will lead to correct views of our trials upon earth as Christians. If we apprehend the sufferings of the Lord merely in the light of the bitter hatred of the Jews, then shall we look upon all the sufferings of the Church, on all her hindrances, on all her difficulties, merely as the result of the bitter enmity of the world against the way of the Lord. And what will this engender but a spirit of impatience and contempt of the things that are now? Thus the Church will be possessed of a different mind from that of the Lord. But when we are made to look upon the divers trials of God's people upon earth, as the chastisement of the Lord, as the just reward of their evil, as an essential element in their cleansing and perfecting, then do our feelings entirely change concerning all things around us. We cease to be bitter against men; we refuse to look at the hand of man, we would see nothing but the hand of God. Filled with such a spirit, we shall be filled also with a yearning desire over all the sons of men, answering to the experience of the Lord when He said upon the tree, "Father, forgive them."

OCTOBER 29.

"*Shouldest not thou also have had compassion upon thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee.*"—MATT. xviii. 33.

LET us meditate concerning that charity which loves God and our neighbour as ourselves. Let us consider it as a great means of strength to us in resisting temptation. What gives such an entrance to the adversary as uncharitableness! If the heart be abiding in unity and forbearance with all the brethren, then Satan will not find us ready instruments to do his will. If we act or feel towards our brethren in a spirit that is contrary to the spirit in which God acts towards us, then shall we become the prey of the adversary and the sport of temptation. We know we are foolish and wayward, and ever grieving God. But we know also He is always pitying us, and not laying our sins to our charge—yea, that He is rather helping us to get delivered from them. Now, do we so love the brethren? Do we put forth the same helping hand to them, that God is putting forth to us? Then shall we be mightily helped against all assaults of the devil. Then shall we be blameless and innocent of the souls of our brethren, and appear with acceptance before God in His glory.

OCTOBER 30.

"*He gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude, and they did all eat, and were filled.*"—MATT. xiv. 19, 20.

JESUS deals His bread to the hungry. He who suffers for sin and lays down His life for men, feeds the hungry. It is a marvellous thing which the Lord does. He finds the multitude in the wilderness without food. How does He comport Himself? Does He lose His presence of mind? Nay. He was in the wilderness once before. He was sorely tempted and hungry. He trusted in God then, and was delivered. On that occasion without intervention of what one might call providence. But now He trusts in God as the God of providence, and God gives help to Him and all his followers. Loaves are found. They are multiplied to overflowing by the word of Jesus. Now, does nothing like this, at the present time, happen to God's people in the wilderness? *They* only know the spiritual significance of this miracle who have faith to discern in the little piece of bread, and the small drop of wine in the Holy Sacrament, the bread and cup of Everlasting Life. A real change took place on these five loaves, though their substance remained the same. The bread and wine in the Communion remain the same, but lo! they become to the faithful the precious Body and Blood of Jesus.

OCTOBER 31.

"*What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.*"—Ps. cxvi. 12, 13.

ONE name which has been given to the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the Eucharist. The word Eucharist signifies thanksgiving. And we need to be reminded that the service of Communion is essentially a Thanksgiving. It is the great act of Thanksgiving in the Christian Church. It is impossible for us to enter into the spirit of this holy service, and pay our thanks unto the Lord, while we are found in the habitual practice of complaint, or filled with indifference of heart. The thankful spirit has not its beginning on a Communion Morning. It is the expression of the abiding tenor of a Christian's life. This is so important, that it is good to test ourselves regarding it. How shall we do this but by looking at the state of our minds in the midst of troubles and disappointments. Are we found murmuring? Then are we showing a lack of the Eucharistic spirit. In ease and prosperity there is no proof of this; but in crosses and trials the heart of a godly man will be found giving thanks to God for them. Yea, he will confess himself worthy of them, and thank God that every hour is not an hour of trial. Thus will he see such cause for gratitude, that the holy Sacrament will ever be to him a Eucharistic act.

NOVEMBER 1.

"*The whole Family in heaven and earth.*"—EPH. iii. 15.

A PART of God's family is in heaven, and another part on earth; yet are they not *two* families, but *one*. God has knit together all the saints in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of His Son. That part of the Church which is seen on earth forms only a small portion of it, the greater part having "fallen asleep." But they and we are still one. The family-tie is not broken. The "Communion of Saints" is not interrupted. The whole family of God being one in Christ, a spiritual and blessed communion still exists between us on earth and the saints in heaven. As they, though departed, still hold communion with us, so do we unite with them in the worship and praise of God. They and we have the One glorious Hope set before us. They, as well as we, pray for the appearing of the Lord, crying, with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true?"

The Church of Christ, then, both in heaven and in earth, is essentially *one* in Jesus Christ. Nothing can dissolve the unity. And, blessed be God, at the glorious manifestation of the sons of God, the Church shall be *seen* to be one.

NOVEMBER 2.

"Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."—I PETER iv. 8.

WHEN we draw near to celebrate the holy Communion, we see in the memorials of Christ's Passion the symbol and pledge of Christ's power and readiness to forgive all our sins. In that holy service He draws near to us to cover us with the mantle of charity. As He does this, He seems to say unto us, "Go ye forth and deal towards the brethren as I have dealt towards you." At no time, perhaps, have we a more lively sense of Christ's gentleness, forbearance, and love towards us than we experience when He is giving us to feed upon His Body and Blood. And never, perhaps, at any other time have we such a lively sense of our own utter nothingness and unworthiness. This leads us to lay ourselves low before Him, and to cry out, "Jesus, have mercy upon us." And, behold, He draws nigh to us, saying, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you." Oh what a lesson, then, is in all this to us, that we be ready to cast the mantle of charity and forgiveness over those who offend us! Are we doing so? Or are our hearts filled with hard thoughts and bitter feelings towards them? Nay, let the same mind be in us towards them as is in Christ towards us.

NOVEMBER 3.

"*Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*"—1 PETER iv. 8.

LET us meditate still further on the truth, that Jesus, at the holy Communion, is casting the mantle of His charity around us, and thereby teaching us our duty towards the brethren. Christ is our spiritual Father, and we are His children. Alas! how disobedient and undutiful have we been! Yet He doth not visit us to punish us. Lo! He putteth into our hands the emblems of His dying love, to show unto us that He forgiveth all our undutifulness. In this Christ sets an example to parents and children. In their relative duties towards each other they have all failed. Parents, as they see the mercy of Christ towards them, are instructed to be tender and merciful, and full of pity towards the failings of their children; and the children, not only by the example of Christ, who was subject to His parents, but by the spirit of dutiful and reverent dependence which we, as His children, are to exercise towards Him, are taught how to honour their father and mother. The same lesson of charity, forgiveness, and duty is taught to husbands and wives, to masters and servants, by Christ, Who is the Husband of the Church—His Bride, Who is our Lord and Master, and Whom we are called to serve.

NOVEMBER 4.

"Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God."—EPH. v. 2.

THE character of Christ's sacrifice, His entire surrender of all His being unto God, marks the character that we have to show forth. It would be akin to profanity to presume the possibility of the Saviour giving Himself to God, and yet keeping aught back. Not less serious and solemn, however, are the privilege and responsibility of the followers of Christ, each in his measure, to surrender himself wholly unto God, keeping nothing back of soul, body, and spirit. Indeed, daily must we, in obedience to the Word of the Lord, offer up all to Him! It is ours to say with David, "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee." (1 Chron. xxix. 14.)

Every gift, faculty, power, and thought are to be laid at the feet of Jesus, that He may use them all to magnify, serve, and adore the Father. Christ offered Himself "a sacrifice to God," and we, in imitation of Him, are to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." Are we so doing? Do we seek to preserve our bodies undefiled, remembering that they are "the members of Christ," that they are "temples of the Holy Ghost?" Alas! alas! how have we failed!

NOVEMBER 5.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."—MATT. xxv. 40.
"From whom" (*Christ the Head*) *"the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."*—EPH. iv. 16.

WHEN Christians—the members of Christ's body, the Church—minister help unto their fellow-Christians, members with them in the unity of the one body, it is said to be done *unto Him.* He has chosen each member for the supply of a certain measure of strength, that He may accomplish His purpose by the Church. Each—even such as might be accounted by man as "the least," the most insignificant—is a "joint" in "the body" supplying help. When any, therefore, are, through the assaults of the enemy, marred and crippled for the work, acts of kindness to them are not as acts of benevolence and charity to them as isolated persons. They are acts done unto the members of Christ, that He might not be deprived of the instruments He needs for the Father's work and worship. Ministering, therefore, such help, is emphatically said to be done "*unto Me.*" Done unto the Lord, no doubt, as pleasing to His sympathising heart, but done *unto Him* specially, as affording Him help to do His Father's work in and by that member of the Church. Thus it is through the help afforded by each and all, that the "body of Christ" will come "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

NOVEMBER 6.

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."—PHIL. ii. 4.

RELIGION among men is of two kinds. It is personal or selfish, and therefore of a *negative* character; or it is catholic or universal, and therefore of a *positive* character. In the one case, the heart does not grow into great desires, being contented with what little it knows as sufficient for its present comfort; in the other case, the heart burns with desires greater than any present gratification. In the one case, the heart is contented to allow Satan to keep his dominion, provided its personal peace be not disturbed; in the other case, the heart is aggressive upon Satan's kingdom, and cannot allow him to retain it. In the one case, the heart has little apprehension of the evil that is in earthly things and ways; in the other case, the heart has very keen discernment that earthly things and ways are corrupt and seductive in their tendency. In the one case, the heart is flattered with the vain thought that there is much good among men, and that evil things will right themselves; in the other case, the heart, while it rejoices in the good, is filled with intense desire that it may be gathered up and saved, by the coming of the Lord, from being crushed by the evil.

NOVEMBER 7.

"*He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.*"—ACTS xvii. 25.

GOD is the Author of all life. From Him we derive our natural life. From Him also we derive our spiritual life. We can as little communicate to ourselves spiritual life, as we can communicate to ourselves or others natural life. Life, then, natural and spiritual, is the absolute gift of God to us. But though we can never become the author or giver of life, we are nevertheless responsible for the preservation and right use of life when given to us. We should be guilty of great sin did we quench the life of the body, or fail to nourish it by the use of the means God has appointed for that end. We should be guilty of great sin also did we not make such use of the life given to us as would fulfil the purposes of God. Now, all this is equally true of spiritual life. We are to preserve it; we are to nourish it with food fitted for it. Public and private prayer, the reading of God's Word, the use of the ordinances of the Church, the feeding on the Body and Blood of Christ in the holy Communion, are all fitted to nourish the spiritual life. This spiritual life, however, must not only be nourished; it must also be exercised in spiritual and holy actions agreeable to God's will.

NOVEMBER 8.

"*Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*"
—GAL. v. 16.

So long as the children of God are in this mortal state they are the subjects of a great and momentous conflict. This is because they are partakers of two natures opposed to each other. There is the old and sinful nature which we derive from Adam, and which is characterised in Scripture as *the flesh.* There is the new and divine nature of which we are made partakers through our union with Christ. And the flesh or the corrupt nature ("in which dwelleth no good thing") ever lusteth against the Spirit of God dwelling in us. It is ever trying to crush the divine life. It is ever prompting us to sinful indulgence. It is ever trying to bring us down to earthly indulgence. How shall we secure the victory over the flesh? The Apostle says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." We are to be led by the Spirit. Now, He is ever seeking to lead, to guide, to sanctify us. By all the means and ordinances of grace, by the word of God, by His tender admonitions He seeks to lead us. And if we thus walk in the Spirit, if we yield ourselves up to His guidance, if we wholly renounce all dependence upon ourselves, we shall be more than conquerors over the lusts of the flesh.

NOVEMBER 9.

"We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."—2 COR. v. 4.

THE Apostle Paul was led by the Spirit, and strengthened by Him to resist the motions and temptations of *the flesh*. But he felt the awful severity of the struggle. The agony of it was dreadful. He says, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." And then, as though utterly wearied out by the fierce contest in which he was engaged, he bursts out with the exclamation, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" He longs for the end of the battle. He knows it must last as long as he is in the mortal body, and can only cease when the mortal has become immortal, and the vile body has been changed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. In the earthly house of this tabernacle he groaned, being burdened; and he earnestly desired to be clothed upon with his house from heaven. This blessed release from conflict will be realised when Christ appeareth in glory, "and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." The stronghold of Satan is our flesh. But our hope is to throw off this earthly coil. Thus, being free from any struggle, we shall be fitted for the uninterrupted display of God's glory, and be ready to give Him unwearied service. Come! O blessed day of deliverance!

NOVEMBER 10.

"*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.*"—1 JOHN iv. 4.

THE children of God, seeking to glorify Him, and advancing towards the attainment of their own glory, are sorely beset by oppressing influences. Walking in the counsel of God, it would seem natural to think that the way would be made plain to them, that no hindrances would prevail to stop their progress. True it is that the whole current of the world is against them, yet God is on their side. It is His cause they are advancing; it is not the cause of the world. He is stronger than the world. Yet we know, by sad experience, that the world now proves to be often too powerful for us; and we go forward heavy and oppressed in heart. What should be our conduct in this trial? Should we despond? or should we the more renew our energies to obtain the prize, through the help of the Almighty? Let us go on our way rejoicing. These hindrances are, under God, favourable to the growth of our Christian character. They are proofs that God is with us, and seeking by them to cleanse and prove our faith. Verily He is not against us. He is on our side. He is putting strength into us. His power is ever put forth to help and not to crush us.

NOVEMBER 11.

"*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*"—MATT. v. 16.

A HOLY man is not merely a pious man, whose character is to be commended. He is more than that. He is a man by whose walk and conversation, by whose every action, God is manifesting Himself unto men, and moving forward in fulfilment of His purposes. God is walking among the sons of men in that man. He is making him the witness unto men of that righteousness which He is about to establish in the earth for ever. The good works of a faithful one are the operations of the Holy Ghost, developing, though little by little, the wondrous mystery of "God manifest in the flesh." It is not by belief of certain doctrines or theories about God that we work out His purpose, but by doing His will. And the man who faithfully does God's will has abundant reward now, in the consciousness of pleasing God and being an instrument in His hands for showing forth His praise and glory among men. His full reward shall be given him hereafter, when he shall have his place in that kingdom of righteousness which shall be manifested before all men, when the Righteous King cometh.

NOVEMBER 12.

"The Pharisees said unto His disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?"—MATT. ix. 11.

IT is easy to find Christ as He pours out blessings through the ordinances of His Church. It is easy to find Him dwelling in fellowship with His faithful people. But have we faith enough, have we charity and the spirit of brotherhood enough, to find Him with those who have fallen under the power of evil? If we would see Jesus in His excellence and love as *The Saviour*, then let us see Him cleaving to those who are walking unworthily. He is ever holding fast by them in meekness and lowliness, longsuffering and forbearance. He has not cast them away, He has not cut them off, and shut them out from His love and mercy. Are they famishing for lack of spiritual food? He brings to them continually the Bread of Life. Are they thirsty? He holds out to them the Cup of Salvation. Have they made themselves strangers to the Covenant of Grace? He invites them to abide within it. Do they appear naked and stripped? He would clothe them with the garment of Salvation. Are they seen as those who are sick? He bears their sickness, and comes to them with healing. Are they imprisoned and in bondage? Behold! Christ enters the prison-house to set the captives free. In all their sufferings, He suffers. He still counts them His brethren and cleaves to them. Oh let us feel that we also are one with Him and with them!

NOVEMBER 13.

"*Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"—MATT. xviii. 3.

THE Scriptures contain solemn warning to us that we can neither receive Jesus now, nor enter into His kingdom at His appearing, save as little children. If we would receive Jesus, it must be as the "holy Child at God's right hand." They who lay hold of Jesus must themselves become as little children in His hands. They who would worship Jesus in the eternal age, must learn to worship Him with the faith and simplicity of little children, whom He may take up and carry in His arms. What are we? Helpless children, who cannot raise themselves into the kingdom of God, but who must be raised by the hand of another. Helpless children, who cannot feed themselves, but must be fed by the hand of another. Helpless children, who cannot guide themselves, but who must be guided by the hand of another. In this spirit let us come to Jesus. The greatest, the wisest, the most learned must all imbibe this spirit, and be proved and trained in it, ere they can be fitted to show forth the glory of God.

NOVEMBER 14.

"*The Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*"—DEUT. xiii. 3.

PART of God's work among the children of Israel in the wilderness was to try and prove the spirit that was in them. It was not merely the pillar of cloud, nor the manna, nor the glory of God on the Tabernacle, that prepared the people for the inheritance. It was circumstances of disappointment and trial that searched their hearts. So God would now sift us who have set out for the heavenly inheritance, that our hearts may be purified, even as Christ is pure. It is not the gifts of God merely that will purify our spirits. There must be painful disappointments and trials, that it may be proved what is in us. In our journey to the Promised Land, our path is beset with most pressing circumstances and trials. We must never forget that they are sent or allowed of God, and therefore to be received with all lowly gratitude. Let us avoid the spirit that looks upon trials as hardships undeserved on our part. Let us receive them as needed to prepare us for the Coming of the Lord. Then shall we be strengthened to endure them.

NOVEMBER 15.

"*There was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.*"—NUM. xxvi. 65.

IT is a very solemn thought that only two were numbered on the plains of Moab that had been numbered by Moses on Mount Sinai. They had perished in the wilderness. Some in one way, and some in another, had grieved the Lord. Oh, the forty years was a terrible time of trial! It so sifted men, that scarcely a greater trial could have been put upon Israel. It brought out what was in man, and how incapable he was of resisting the multitude of forms in which Satan persuades him to murmur against God. Yet there is something cheering in the fact that there were two. Is not this a solemn illustration of the saying, "Many shall seek to enter—few shall find." Surely we should not hide from ourselves, that at all times the peril is very great. We should brace up our spiritual being to endure, to watch, to struggle with God, lest we be taken unawares and grieve the Spirit of God. We must needs go with a trembling heart, and ponder well our steps. Let us be found hanging upon the Lord. Let us tremble to offend Him. Thus shall we find entrance into the kingdom.

NOVEMBER 16.

"*Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.*"—EPH. iv. 1, 2.

WE are to do this, "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We cannot bear ourselves towards the brethren in "lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, and patience," unless we feel that we are bound up with them in that *unity* or *oneness* which the Spirit hath formed. Man is, *by nature*, selfish, oppressive, proud, and self-esteeming. When men follow their natural instincts, misery, cruelty, and confusion follow. The fact that we all belong to the one family of Adam is inefficient to keep down the risings of the nature derived from Adam. Therefore, when men follow the leading of the flesh, they are unkind, selfish, and tyrannical. Hence the misery that is in the earth. Hence the disorder, and trouble, and confusion everywhere to be found. There is only one remedy for all this selfishness, cruelty, and pride. It is to know and realise that we have been made members one of another in Christ, and are bound up in the *unity* or *oneness* formed by the Spirit of God. It is only as this is ever present in our spirits as a *fact*, that we shall be able to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering and forbearance."

NOVEMBER 17.

"*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called,*" &c.
—EPH. iv. 4–6.

HAVING given the admonition, that we "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," the Apostle proceeds to strengthen this by showing *in what* and *in Whom* we are all made one. "There is one Body and one Spirit." We are members of that "one Body"—we are made alive by that "one Spirit." Shall we be injurious and unkind to the members who are one with us—partakers with us of the life of Christ? "There is one Lord." Jesus is Lord and Head of the "one Body." Shall we wound, and grieve, and oppress Him in His members? Whatever we do to them is done to Him. If we injure them, we injure Him. If we help them, we help Him. "There is one Hope, one Faith, one Baptism." Shall we try to make the members feel that they have a *different* Hope from ours, that they are not in the *same* Faith with us, or that we have not all been, by the "one Baptism," made members of the Church of Christ? We do all we can to effect this when we do not realise their *unity* or *oneness* with us, and ours with them. "There is one God and Father of all." We are children of the same family, and we should love as brethren, bearing with and helping one another. God as a Father loves all His children. Oh, let us remember, then, *in what* and *in Whom* we are all one. This will help us to bear with others, to feel for others, and to overcome self and selfishness.

NOVEMBER 18.

"*He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?*" —JOHN ix. 35, 36.

IT was a great work Jesus did on the blind man. The man maintained a decided witness for it against the rulers. But it does not appear from the narrative that as yet he had faith in Jesus as the Son of God. The mere exercise of power upon him does not seem to have touched his heart. After this the Lord meets him again, and speaks to him the *Word*—the word of truth, of which he was ignorant, for he knew not Christ as the Son of God. The man believes, and yields his heart to the Lord. The miracle wrought upon him served its place, but it drew him not to Jesus. All this teaches us, that it is the ministration of the *Word*, rather than of *power* that brings men into subjection to God. It is the *Word* that is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. This leaves men without apology. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Oh, with what earnest heed should we listen to the Word of God, that it may daily cleanse and bring us into subjection!

NOVEMBER 19.

"The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."—2 THESS. iii. 5.

THE people of God more and more rejoice, with trembling, as they see the thick-gathering signs of the near approach of the blessed Lord. All the scattered threads of God's workings hitherto, in the Church and in the world, seem to be swiftly converging to the one great point—the Appearing of Him, for, by, and through Whom all things exist. Those who stand, as it were on tiptoe, looking and longing for His Coming, are tempted to cry out, almost in impatient anxiety, "Why tarry His chariot wheels?" Herein is our discipline. We must be in God's hands, and enter, with the fulness of faith, into the carrying out, step by step, of His purpose. God overleaps nothing, everything is done in order, everything is necessary. We walk along a road and see the place of our destination visible before us —we long to reach it. Ah! but we must go towards it *step by step*, and we are weary, perhaps, with the multitude of the steps. But each is necessary. And He whose way is in the Sanctuary, goeth forward, *step by step*, for the fulfilment of His great purpose; and we, as fellow-workers with Him, are called upon to accompany Him.

NOVEMBER 20.

"*The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*"—2 THESS. iii. 5.

THE earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. The sons of God wait and long for the Appearing of Jesus, at Whose Coming their title to sonship shall be made manifest. God is moving forward, in orderly progression, to accomplish His purpose of filling the whole earth with His glory. And *in love* He overleaps no step in the necessary progress. Let us then, while we keep our eye steadfastly on the Hope set before us, not be weary of the journey or of the discipline we experience therein. Every act of holy worship, every cup of cold water given to a disciple, every wiping away of the tears of the Lord's oppressed ones, every burden that we bear as from the Lord, are *necessary steps* to bring about the Coming of the King. This purpose of the Lord is not to be brought about with violent efforts, but by men and women following the leading of the Lord in the prosecution of their daily work and daily worship. As we follow God in this way, we are one with Jesus in the longing that is upon His heart, to bring to pass speedily all that He hath promised unto His Church.

NOVEMBER 21.

"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you."—JOHN xvi. 23.

WE offer up our prayers unto God, and we ask Him to hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ. God is ever ready to hear when His faithful people come before Him, casting themselves upon the Atonement of His Son. The more that we, with the eye of faith and the heart of love, apprehend the Atonement of the Saviour, the more will God be known by us as ready to hear and answer our prayers. We are learning, and have yet much to learn, concerning the vastness of that Atonement. And the more our sorrow and discipline cast us upon it, the more shall we discover how firm is the foundation on which we stand, when we plead it in our prayers before God. Our prayers are *faithful* in proportion as we pray *in faith* of the Atonement.

God's purpose is to honour and exalt His Son. He waits to reward Him for the travail He endured, even unto death. And when the heart is elevated and enlarged by the prospect of the future glory, to be manifested through the Atonement, we will pray that Christ may be thus honoured in the *perfect deliverance of Creation.* Thus shall we obtain an *effectual* answer to our prayers.

NOVEMBER 22.

"*The publican . . . smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*"—LUKE xviii. 13.

THE Church is the Temple of God. It is the Temple of the Holy Ghost. Unto it God charges all men to come up and worship. It is the place of His abode—of His glory—upon the earth. Thither must we assemble ourselves. In this parable, the Lord warns us of the spirit in which we must not come up, and gives clear hints as to the spirit in which all should worship. The publican smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." St Paul said he was "the chief of sinners"—he said he was "the least of all saints"—he was "not worthy to be called an apostle." These expressions do not set forth the personal experience of the apostle only; they speak of our experience. As we see our natural condition before God, we are laden in heart with such a discernment of our helplessness and insufficiency, as will make us enter into these expressions. This leads each of us to confess, "By His grace, I am what I am." How different this from the word of the Pharisee, "I thank Thee that I am not as other men are!"

NOVEMBER 23.

"I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye," &c.—MATT. xxv. 35, 36.

THE more we attain to a spirit of true humility before God, the more shall we be found living for others rather than for ourselves. We shall see the truth of this if we compare the word where God says, He "will dwell with him that is of a broken and a contrite heart," with the word in Matt. xxv., where the Lord calls to His right hand those who have done righteously towards their brethren. The holy actions, spoken of in the latter passage, flow from the humility of spirit spoken of in the former passage. When we come into our true position of humility before God, then do we come also into our true position of charity towards man. It is instructive to observe how the final judgment of God proceeds, not on the extent of a man's creed, but on the fact, yea or nay, of what he has done to his brethren. Perhaps there is no period of the Christian age in which a better opportunity is afforded to the faithful in Christ Jesus of kindness to their brethren. Let us show that enlargement of heart, that true godlike spirit, that embraces in one desire, prayer, hope, and love, the brethren of Christ that are "sick," "hungry," "thirsty," "naked," "in prison," "strangers."

NOVEMBER 24.

"*These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.*"
—REV. xiv. 4.

REGARDING the 144,000 who are sealed with the Father's name written upon their foreheads, it is said, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." How glorious the occupation! How glorious the train in which to follow! In the kingdom about to be revealed, the sealed ones wait upon His pleasure. He reposes in them confidence and trust, and they perform His will throughout His vast and great dominion. But who can look for such an honour? Who can look for the holy sealing that fits us for such a glorious calling? None save those who now follow the Lamb in His humiliation.

We must follow Him now in His *descent* if we would follow Him in His *ascent*. He seeks to lead us in His own way, that His gracious purpose may be fulfilled in us and by us. Let us seek to follow Him in that way. It is not the path that leads us unto the world's honour. Rather is it the path that leads us unto penitence and patience, forbearance and witness-bearing against all evil. Taking our stand now on the side of Jesus in His humiliation, we shall take our stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion.

NOVEMBER 25.

"And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God."—REV. xiv. 5.

THE sealed stand on Mount Zion, and "there was no guile found in their mouths." But they shall stand there, because, on earth, they were as Nathanael, of whom the Lord said, "In whom is no guile!" As they felt in their hearts, they spake with their tongue. As they loved all men in their hearts, so they spake no evil with the tongue. As they thought no evil, neither did they open their lips against any man. As they believed in Jesus in their hearts, so they honoured him in all their conversation. They spake the truth one to another; no lie was found in their lips.

Those who are sealed "are without fault before the throne of God." They are presented spotless unto God. Who are they? Are they not sinners of mankind? Once they were "wretched, miserable, blind, and naked." As we meditate this, our hearts are drawn out to the contemplation of that Blood which cleanses from all sin. They who would seek to stand on Mount Zion must renew their faith in the Blood of the Lamb, and lay their all at the foot of the cross. Thus not only shall they have grace now to overcome the flesh, but, accepted in the Beloved, abide pure in the cleansing of Him in Whom the Father sees no fault.

NOVEMBER 26.

"*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.*"—Ps. xxv. 14.

THE fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. They who fear and dread His holy Name are not only safe from the spirits of darkness, and from the cunning device of man, but are in the *secret* of the Lord. How wise and mighty are they who dwell in the secret! They are able to contend with the weightiest influence that the devil, world, or flesh can bring to bear against them. They are simple-hearted; they are assured of what is the mind of God; they are not tossed with the divers winds that blow. Hidden in God, they dwell peacefully in His counsel, and have no uncertainty whether the devices of devils or of men are or are not true. From their holy dwelling-place they can look and discern distinctly the wily cheats that are deceiving the wisest in the world. All God's ways are clear as noonday to the man who fears Him. They lead from all evil; they separate more and more from worldly hopes and prospects. But is this wisdom—this understanding—to be hidden? No; the more it is appreciated, the more will "Wisdom cry in the streets"—the more will she plead with all men, saying, "Forsake the foolish, and live."

NOVEMBER 27.

"*The heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.*"—JOEL iii. 16.

THIS saying the Lord will fulfil through the occurrence of ordinary events; through the passions and prejudices of men; or through the movements of the blessed Spirit among His people. And do we not now behold all things shaking? Do we not now see the most ancient institutions breaking up? Do we not see that the most active steps are taken to prop them up, lest they fall? Wherefore all this? Let us not look to secondary causes. Let us behold in it the voice of the Lord: "I will shake the heavens and the earth." And while there is sorrow for it, yet there is also joy, for it is the sure token that "the Desire of all nations" shall speedily appear. We behold the shakings with humility and penitence, because we have the solemn fact before our eyes, that all in which men do glory is vanity—is unprofitable—is unfit for the purposes of God. And is not this condition of heart, aided as it is by present outward circumstances, the due preparation of spirit which leads us to look to the hope of the glorious advent of Jesus, as the only deliverance out of all our troubles? Looking around, and looking forward, we can say, "We give up all hopes from anything seen, and look only for the King who shall come."

NOVEMBER 28.

"*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.*"—MATT. xvi. 24.

WE need constantly to be reminded that Christianity is not a doctrine merely, but a *life*. Were we simply called upon to give an assent to abstract principles or truths, even as they are set forth in the creeds of the Church, it were an easy matter to be a Christian. It might involve no crucifying of the flesh, no denying of ourselves; but to take in reality upon us the yoke of Christ is contrary to all the desires and tendencies of our fallen nature. It implies a continual conflict, and the most vigilant and diligent use of all the means whereby we are strengthened to crucify the old man. The words of our blessed Lord are very weighty: "If any man will be My disciple, let him take up his cross and follow Me." It is necessary in these days to be reminded, that the relative duties of this life are to be performed in the spirit of those who take up the cross and follow Christ. The complaint comes forth that social iniquity makes progress. We see neglect of duty in parents, irreverence and disobedience in children, tyranny and neglect in masters, unfaithfulness in servants. How needful, then, to remember, that His authority rests on every relative duty, and that His will must be the rule of our lives.

NOVEMBER 29.

"*Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal: knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.*"—COL. iv. 1.

MASTERS and mistresses are tempted to forget that they also have a Master in heaven: that the place they occupy is not an accident, but is given to them by the Lord, that they may serve Him therein. Yielding to this temptation, they not only fail to manifest Christ, the heavenly Master, but entail on themselves and those under them the suffering and unhappiness of a selfish and perverted rule. Such evils God would have you escape; and, to this end, consider well that the influence and authority with which you are intrusted, are not for your own advantage merely, but that you may show out the loving rule of your Lord, in tenderly caring for those whom He has set under you. This trust is no light matter. You cannot fulfil it, save through the all-sufficient grace of Him who gives us strength for the service He calls us to. You may have many trials through the infirmities and disobedience of those under your rule. Ever endeavour to rule for God, and weary not in well-doing. You will learn long-suffering and forbearance with those under you, as you contemplate the daily compassion and forgiveness shown by God towards your own many shortcomings.

NOVEMBER 30.

"*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters,*" *&c.*
—EPH. vi. 5–8.

TO you who are set in the place of servants, how comforting is the thought that, in some respects, you are especially called to manifest Jesus. He came not to be ministered unto, but that He himself might serve, even to the giving His life a ransom for many. He took upon Him the form of a *servant;* and He was the servant of God and man. "Behold my servant whom I have chosen," was the declaration of God concerning Him. "I am among you as one that serveth," was the touching appeal by which He enforced His lesson of condescension upon His disciples. And thus by His own presence in it, has He dignified and made honourable that very condition which the eye of sense regards as the least desirable among men. You are tempted to forget that your place in society is the Lord's appointment for you, and thus you are tempted to fret and murmur at your position. Hence envious and jealous thoughts of those above you in station are ready to spring up, engendering a spirit of opposition to rule, at once a torment to yourselves, a distress to those set over you, and a dishonour to your Lord.

DECEMBER 1.

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters," &c.
—EPH. vi. 5–9.

IT is one of the crying evils of our time that the relation between master and servant has become one of pure selfishness. Masters have forgotten and neglected the solemn responsibilities of being God's ordinances, for shielding and blessing those under their rule, and have been tempted to look upon them as little better than machines for the performance of a certain amount of work. Servants have failed to hold their masters in reverence, as being set over them by the Lord, and whom, with good will, they are to serve, "as to the Lord, and not to man." Because this has been forgotten, we hear lamentation on all sides of the disorder that prevails in the one class and in the other. These things ought not to be. Let masters be instructed in their duties towards those who serve, by considering how the Lord Jesus, our Master, beareth Himself with *firmness* and *gentleness* towards us His undutiful and unprofitable servants. Let servants be instructed in their duties, by observing the spirit and demeanour, the humility and obedience of the Lord Jesus, when He appeared on earth in the character of a servant. In all conditions let us faithfully manifest Jesus.

DECEMBER 2.

"*Behold the Lamb of God.*"—JOHN i. 36.

THIS we are to do through all time, yea, through all eternity. Only thus can we abide in faith, and stand fast in the grace of God. Only thus can we now maintain our confidence unshaken by the creature's miserable failure. We must look, not to ourselves, but to "the Lamb of God." The way by which the Israelites were freed from the serpents was, not by looking at or thinking of them, but by thinking of and looking at the brazen serpent. The way for us to escape the evils which assault and cleave to us, children of God though we be, is not by dwelling on those evils, but on "the Lamb of God" in whom we are, to the glory of God. The constant dwelling on the work of the Lamb is the mode by which sin and failure lose their power over the child of God. Satan makes sad havoc in the heart, and, consequently, on the spiritual energy of the faithful, by making them trust in their own efforts to overcome evil. How much the time, thought, and affections of a Christian are occupied with dwelling upon himself! How little with dwelling upon "the Lamb of God," upon His grace bestowed on us, and upon the expectation of His coming again! God has appointed that our victory over all evil is to be through faith—faith in the act and work of the Saviour.

DECEMBER 3.

"Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."
—1 COR. xiii. 12.

MANY are the delights we have had in the use of our eye; but the delight of delights is yet to come, the end of all vision—even that we might see Jesus. Many are the precious words that our ears hear now, but the purpose of that organ can only be realised in its fulness, when we shall hear His voice, which is like the sound of many waters. Many are the words of peace and wisdom that have flowed from the lips of man; but the purpose of the creation of speech will only be realised when we shall pay homage to Him in His glory, and ascribe to Him the praise due to His name. Many an enjoyment has come to us through the exercise of our minds, but the powers of our intellectual faculties shall only be known when we shall appreciate the unfoldings of eternal wisdom. Man is formed for the highest enjoyment of all the faculties; and as Jesus is the Fountain of everything that is capable of enjoyment to the creature, so the ultimate hope and end of all religion is that we may be in the presence of Jesus and behold Him face to face.

DECEMBER 4.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"—1 COR. x. 16.

WHILE the Lord's Supper is indeed the highest service of the Church, it is also the simplest. It is a beautiful institution, fitted to bring the sons of God continually to the foundation of their faith and hope. It alike lifts up the children to their glorious standing, and keeps them in the consciousness of their helplessness. It exalts, but it lays low; it builds up, but it is ever re-laying and establishing the foundation. The faithful, bent on an onward course to the kingdom of God, are never allowed to forget who they are, and to what they owe their salvation day by day. At all times is it needful to have the clearest apprehension of that on which our hope rests. But specially must heed be given to this in days of peril, when holy men are grieving that efforts are being made to remove the very foundations of Christianity. The spirit of intellectual pride and of infidelity has entered the Church, and shaken many from their confidence in the atonement. How may we escape this danger? Only by ever discerning Jesus Christ as the true foundation, and by renouncing every other ground of joy and trust, save the grace of God, through the blood of Jesus.

DECEMBER 5.

"Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."—MATT. xxiii. 12.

OUR Lord was the pattern of men. He was, as a man, the image of God. He was just what man should be. He was humble and docile, He was single-hearted and pure, He was dependent and submissive. In all this He maintained the dignity of His manhood. His faculties were not crushed; for it is said that "He grew in wisdom." Man in general is the very reverse. He is self-willed and proud, he is self-interested and heady. And all this is counted *manliness*. This arises from a mistaken idea concerning man's true glory. Man is never so exalted, never rises so thoroughly to the dignity of a man, as when he walks in humility before God, and throws himself in a spirit of absolute dependence upon Him. Let us, then, never permit the influence of the world around us to withdraw us from following the example of Christ. Its whole habits are opposed to it. Its most refined, most polished ways are, on examination, contrary to that lowliness and meekness of character which Christ displayed. We are stunted in our growth through lack of humility. We are crushed as men, not through adverse circumstances, but through pride.

DECEMBER 6.

"*I laboured more abundantly than they all:* yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."—1 COR. xv. 10.

BY no power natural to us can we do any Christian act. We are engrafted into Christ and made partakers of His life; yea, He is our life, and He "liveth in us." Because we are spiritually alive in Christ Jesus, all our duties are performed by the quickening power of His Spirit, and are therefore the acts of Christ performed through us, that is, through the members of His Body. Do I come before God in the exercise of prayer? Then of this holy act of worship I can say, "I prayed; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Prayer is not the utterance of some desire originating in the creature. What is prayer? It is presenting before God the desires that are on the heart of Jesus, and which are communicated by the Holy Ghost unto us. When we realise this, then do we see that prayer is not to be exercised as though it had its beginning on earth, and in the hope that it may be heard in heaven. Prayer is the exercise of those who are, even now, dwelling in the *heavenly* places with Christ Jesus; and it is accepted and heard because it hath been originated in the heart by the Spirit of Him who is ever present at the right hand of God making intercession for us. What a high and glorious standing is this, that we are alive in Christ Jesus, and that what we do is done by Him through us!

DECEMBER 7.

"*Christ liveth in me.*"—GAL. ii. 20.

THIS is a very strong expression, but it is a perfectly correct one. It sets forth a mysterious but most blessed reality. The spiritual life of the Christian is indeed an imparting to him of the very life which Christ now has. We cannot understand this; we cannot explain it. We hold it as truth and fact by faith in the Word of God; we realise it to be truth and fact in our actual experience. If, then, the life within us be the life of Jesus Himself, then Jesus yet dwelleth in humanity on the earth, and the acts of a Christian are the manifestations of the higher life within him; they are the acts of Jesus within and by him. How solemn! How deeply responsible our calling, that we yield ourselves as instruments of righteousness, so that the desires of Christ may be fulfilled by us! When He was upon the earth, He went about doing good; and now that He liveth in us, He would still, by using our body, soul, and spirit, go about doing good. Our hands He would use as His hands for the help of the brethren; our eyes He would employ, that through them He may show forth the look which reproves sin, which melts the heart, and speaks to all of His unutterable love. Our tongues He would use as His tongue to tell the message which He would convey to each. Oh, what an honour does He thus confer on us in whom He liveth!

DECEMBER 8.

"Jesus said unto His disciples, They need not depart; give ye them to eat."—MATT. xiv. 16.

WHEN our Lord retired into the desert place on the death of John, it is recorded that great multitudes followed Him, for whose sick He was moved with compassion. He healed them and fed them, though it was in a wilderness, where no sufficient food could be found. This outflow of compassion and love comforted His heart, then suffering under the deep burden of sorrow because of the sin that beheaded John. This narrative conveys very instructive teaching as to the preparation of our heart for receiving that spiritual food which, to those who come in faith, is conveyed in the holy Communion. Surely we are even now in the desert place—in the wilderness. Surely we must be deeply exercised under the oppression and burden of our universal helplessness and depravity. No otherwise can we understand aright that love and mercy which spreadeth a table before us in the wilderness, and giveth us, in the bread and wine, to feed by faith upon the Body and Blood of Christ,—the enjoyment of this feast, and the sustenance contained in it, seem so much to depend upon our being humbled before God.

DECEMBER 9.

"*Little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.*"—1 JOHN ii. 28.

THE times of the Second Advent are described as such that the seas and waves shall roar, and men's hearts shall fail for fear. Such a condition is the result of disquietude of mind. Unless men first learn humility and lowliness, through faith in Christ's precious work in flesh, they can have no power to stand in that day. The humble shall rest in peace, while the rebellious are in disquietude. Let us go to Bethlehem and learn a lesson. Behold Joseph and Mary peacefully resigned to the accommodation in the stable. Behold her waiting there the issue of the woman's expectations. Behold the Babe born and laid in a manger. All was quiet confidence in God; no fear or excitement. In the Inn there was plenty uproar. But in the stable the hearts of this holy family were quietly enduring the leadings of Providence, and bringing the purpose of God to pass. So shall they welcome Him the second time who are now possessing their souls in patience, and quietness, and confidence in God.

DECEMBER 10.

"*Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.*"—EPH. v. 2.

WE are called upon to walk in the Spirit, and to live as those who are daily looking for the Coming of the Lord. The great test that we are abiding faithful in our calling, is that we be found walking in love one to another. We cannot possibly meet the Perfect Man with a clean conscience, neither can we say, "Come Lord Jesus," unless we are seen loving the sons of men for whom the Saviour died. Alas! how often do we escape the searching and proving of ourselves on this matter, by saying, "There is no one to whom we have hatred; we are at peace with all." But is this the love that is enjoined on the members of Christ? Is this the love of the Lord Jesus unto which we must conform? Verily not. To love all men is not a negation. To love all men is not merely to bear them no ill-will. But it is a positive act of love. It is not the restraining of envy or malice towards them; but it is the actual pouring out of tender hearts over them, for real and positive blessings. It is not merely the ceasing to judge them, but the actual intercession for them. In a word, it is to love them as Christ hath loved us.

DECEMBER 11.

"*Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*" —TITUS ii. 14.

IN reading the apostolic Epistles, every one must observe how very earnest the Lord's servants are in keeping steadily and fully before the Church the surpassing glory, and perfect certainty, of what God has done for sinners, and the corresponding effects intended thereby to be produced in us. The Apostle claimed the full surrender unto God of the heart and conscience of every one who had been privileged to hear the blessed announcement of the Holy Gospel; and just because it was *the Gospel.* The Word came from men who had proved its reality, who had felt its power on their own hearts. St Paul could say, "*I know* in Whom I have believed," &c. And St John could say, "*We know* that the Son of God is come, &c.—the Life was manifested, and *we have seen it,*" &c. God does not reap where He has not sown. He has established His claim to our hearty and universal obedience by the greatest of all possible reasons—even the gift of Christ. The Cross of Christ is, to every man, the entire removal of every ground of doubt or uncertainty as to the Father's mind towards him. It is the removal of every excuse for keeping away from God, or for continuing in sin.

DECEMBER 12.

"This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."—JOHN vi. 29.

MOST people are quite ready to admit the truth of the Gospel of God. There is such a thing as the general acknowledgment of truth; the admission of Christian doctrine, without in the least questioning its veracity. This is seen especially among a people familiar with these things from their youth. But will such easy admissions produce those fruits which God expects from the precious seed He has sown? Let us see that we are not deceiving ourselves. It is of the utmost importance that every one should be under no mistake, as to how he looks on the work of Christ as revealed in the Gospel; to see to it that *he* is laying hold of it for *himself*, that *he* is receiving it as good news for *himself*. Let it not be thought a useless or unnecessary question, "Am I believing the Gospel?" "Is Christ to me the All in All of my soul, my affections and desires?" "Am I knowing myself as utterly lost and undone, were it not that the Lamb of God has shed His precious Blood to take away my sin, and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness?" Unless we can answer these questions, we cannot answer the pressing demands of God for holiness of heart and righteousness of life.

DECEMBER 13.

"*We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*"—EPH. ii. 10.

IN order that the fruit may be good, the tree must be made good. This was the principle on which the apostles acted. It explains the full and earnest manner of their continually pressing Christ upon the hearts and consciences of men; yea, of those who had been enrolled as members of the Church. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." Again: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may *believe* on the name of the Son of God." We must continue to believe that "the just live by faith." We are ready to profess our unfruitfulness, our failings, our shortcomings; but are we trying to find out the cause of all this? Are we laying to heart that it may be we are defective in yielding ourselves to the power of Christ's Gospel? That Gospel which in the early Church had such marvellous effects on the hearts and consciences and lives of men, has not changed —has not lost its divine power. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. Let us bear in mind that such deliverance is expected in us. This we attain, by walking after the Spirit.

DECEMBER 14.

"*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*"—GAL. vi. 7.

THE present is the time of our activities. We are all engaged in what will meet us another day. It is the sowing-time, and the harvest will come. Whatever people may imagine, no one is neutral—they may be self-deceived.

The great privileges conferred on us, though intended for our help and preparation to meet the Lord in peace, will not *necessarily* effect these ends. There is required our hearty and earnest co-operation. St Paul warns the Galatians on this point. They had heard what Christ had done for them, and that all their salvation was through Him, and Him alone. They were earnestly called upon to see that what God had done for them was intended to produce an entire change on their heart and life. And now, when the harvest is near, surely we ought to be considering whether we are sowing to the flesh or to the Spirit. A man does not believe a truth, except in so far as he is affected by it, and lives in it. Look unto Jesus and see, in what He has endured for you, the expression of His love, and let this love constrain you, not to live to yourselves, but unto Him. Let Christ be in your *heart*, and He will show His presence and power in your *life*.

DECEMBER 15.

"*I pray for them which Thou hast given me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine.*"—JOHN xvii. 9, 10.

HOW very solemn is the thought that we are given by the Father unto the Son—given that we may be one with Him, as He is one with the Father. We are given into the hand of Jesus for no purpose of mere personal advantage: but that, in and through us, may be developed, *now* and in *the age to come*, the purposes of the Godhead. We are given by the Father unto Jesus. We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. We are made—we are renewed in the image of God—that in us God may be glorified. God's eye is upon us for this end. When a workman prepares a machine, it is for a specific purpose. He looks upon it only in connexion with that purpose. If it fulfil not the end in view, he considers it as a thing of no use. Let us ponder this fact. Let us meditate the glory of our calling. We are given unto Christ, that through us may be developed those good works which declare the glory of God. Truly these good works bear no proportion now to the honour of Him for whose glory we are created. But let us with lowly, penitent, obedient hearts, wait for the day when, being set free from every hindrance, we shall show forth all His praise.

DECEMBER 16.

"Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—LUKE ii. 11.

IT is instructive to observe, that when the announcement of Messiah was made to the shepherds, they were told that unto them was born a "Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." It is instructive to observe what St Paul says: "We preach not ourselves, but *Christ Jesus the Lord*." And this is the Gospel to all people. Very early in the history of the Church did the apostle complain of dividing Christ, through partial views of truth. He who was born among us is not *Jesus* merely—the Saviour of His people from their sins; nor *Christ* merely—the Anointed of the sons of men, as well as their Anointer; nor *Lord* merely—their Ruler, Governor, and Director; but He is *Jesus*, He is *Christ*, He is *Lord*. He is *Jesus*, or the Priest of His people, who offered Himself a sacrifice for them. He is *Christ*, or the Prophet of His people, anointing them with the Holy Ghost, that they may be enlightened with all truth. He is *Lord*, or King over His people, ruling them now through the ordinances He has appointed, and who will speedily come Himself to reign in the midst of His people. Let us bear faithful witness for Christ in His threefold office. Let us look to Him to save us from our sins, to fill us with the Holy Ghost, and to govern us.

DECEMBER 17.

"In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."—Ps. xvi. 11.

If we really apprehend the excellencies that are in the institutions of the Lord, if we really appreciate the operations of God in our spirits, we cannot help desiring the appearing of Jesus. For what are the experiences we have of Him here? They are as drops compared with the ocean, they are as shadows compared with the substance. And surely, therefore, if through His channels we now taste and see that Jesus is so excellent, we cannot remain satisfied while absent from Him. They but whet the desire for His appearing. They tell us of His love, but they tell us also that we cannot realise *that love* until we see Him face to face. They are, as it were, foretastes of a rich feast. Looked at thus, they loosen our grasp of the present world. For the more we enjoy God and His Christ in all His appointments, the less can we place our happiness on the vain things that are present and visible. For a "little while" we are in the midst of these, and attain not unto the glory that is as yet invisible. In this way our Father is trying and proving us. But soon will He send Him whom we seek.

DECEMBER 18.

"*Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*"—JAMES v. 8.

LET us be patient under the dealings of God's providence; patient under the many trials resulting from the disunion of the saints; patient with one another. Indeed, patience with all men is now our calling more than ever. And this is to be, not a negative, but a positive act; not an act of indifference towards the waywardness of the brethren, but such a patience as God is ever ministering to us—a positive bestowing upon us blessings and mercies in the midst of our wanderings. Three or four times in the Epistles to the seven churches, the Church is noticed as being patient, and commended of God for a condition of mind acceptable to Him. It is one of the charges of Peter to the Church scattered abroad, to add to our temperance "patience." We read again, patience must have its perfect work. Again, Paul glories in the Church for her patience. No virtue is more needed in this day. It is an age of haste and impatience. That we may not be caught in the temptation of this age, let us consider the patience of God with our ways. Let us imbibe the like spirit, and keep His patience till He come.

DECEMBER 19.

"*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.*"
—1 PET. v. 6.

LET us meditate what the apostle means by the "mighty hand of God," under which we must humble ourselves. Men may be flattered in submitting themselves to what may bring glory to them, to what is wonderful in the eyes of others. God may manifest Himself in great power, and men may have a pride in yielding to it. But that kind of submission will not search or purify the heart. Humbling our spirits under the hand of God is a far deeper and more searching thing. It is when the heart apprehends its own nothingness, and the abiding presence of God, though unseen to the mortal eye; when it yields itself up, and subjects its will to Him. We then see the hand of God in all the dealings of His providence. We are so impressed with His Presence in them, that it is felt to be "mighty." The man of God sees Him in His ordinances dealing with him. The child sees Him in the parent; the wife sees Him in the husband; the master sees Him in the servant, and the servant in the master, &c. We see no mere human hand; it is the hand of God we see, and therefore we exercise our spirits to learn humility.

DECEMBER 20.

"*Owe no man anything, but to love one another.*"—ROM. xiii. 8.

JESUS came at the first as One who is no respecter of persons. His care embraced all men. He owed no man anything—but by love served all. He loved His neighbours as Himself, with a love which wrought good and not evil to His neighbour. It is edifying to observe the condition of the seed of Abraham at that period. Divided into parties, the spirit of inveterate hostility pervaded the nation. No man bore his neighbour's burdens, but rather cast his neighbour out. Men had, in the violence of party feeling, forgotten the common duties of neighbourhood. In like manner will be the times of His Second Advent. And they who are waiting for this must enter into the spirit of the words, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." Separate from all judgment, from all party feeling, there must be in the heart an embracing of all the Christian brotherhood. The more men have departed into error and evil, the more scope have we to manifest the spirit of our Master. We must have a conscience void of offence towards all men.

DECEMBER 21.

"*Be careful for nothing.*"—PHIL. iv. 6.

WHAT a glorious calling we have! How full and large is the covenant of God's mercy, well ordered in all things and sure! Careful for nothing! For He who holds up the pillars of the earth, He who overrules every event, is our peace and eternal security. Those who know Christ, who are resting on their Lord's love and faithfulness, can obey this exhortation. They have experienced the truth of God in all that record He has given concerning Christ, and they are persuaded that He will keep what they have committed unto Him against that day. But they who know not God's love in Christ, who are not giving their hearts and their all to Him, must be the prey of corroding cares and anxieties. For, not knowing God, they cannot trust themselves in His hands, but look to false confidences.

We are called to confidence in God; but it must ever be a humble confidence; for only such becomes those who are in a body of sin and death—who are conscious of their failings and shortcomings—who, though their love be sincere, yet know their obedience and service to be feeble and imperfect. Such feelings will find an outlet in the prospect of that time when the struggle will be over and the victory attained, even at the coming of Him who carries our burdens now, and who will appear for the salvation of His people.

DECEMBER 22.

"*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David.*"—LUKE i. 68–69.

IT is edifying to observe the condition of the Jewish Church when the Lord appeared. It was drawing nigh to the summing up of its iniquity. It was full of evil. And He chose that time to come among them to show forth the riches of His grace, and to return good for the evil of many generations. He had all the glory of it. He came not in return for any service Israel had rendered Him. He came rather after their rebellions, and thus showed the largeness of God's love. How the faithful few must have been comforted! How they must have adored the God of Israel! It is easy to imagine what hopelessness and sorrow must have filled their hearts. No doubt they had the general promise of a Messiah; but the state of their people rather precluded the lively expectation of His presence. It would be with them, as it might often be with us—they would have a kind of despair of things ever improving. Our spirits are sad at the increasing abomination and want of faith. But we may not dwell on what we see, and on what really is; we must rejoice that His promise will be fulfilled, and that He will appear the second time to deliver His people.

DECEMBER 23.

"Joseph also went unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife."—LUKE ii. 4, 5.

MEN would call it an arbitrary or absolute act on the part of Cæsar that compelled Mary to go up to Bethlehem. The hand of God was in it. It was not the mere act of a man; it was the watchful providence of God overruling the powers that be. Doubtless there would be many harsh feelings, many hard words against Cæsar, among the oppressed Jews, travelling each one to his own city to be taxed. But there was a small company where at least nought would be heard but the voice of submission and quietness in the hand of the Lord; among whom there would be, on the contrary, a consciousness that a greater than Cæsar was directing these movements. This small company comprised Joseph and Mary. Oh, what a blessed reward they received! They were raised up to be fellow-workers with God, to fulfil His word, and carry forward His purpose of love to all their nation. Surely there is conveyed here most instructive lessons to us, if we would be of a like spirit with Joseph and Mary. Let us see the hand of God in all acts of authority. Then shall we be honoured in these days to help the fulfilment of His gracious purpose.

DECEMBER 24

"*Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*"—HEB. ix. 28.

CHRIST'S first coming was in humility and suffering. His second coming will be in glory and triumph. These two parts of His advent should be ever regarded by us. God has joined them together, let us not put them asunder. And yet this has been done. Some dwell at the cross, love the cross, honour the cross, rejoice in salvation by the cross; and in so doing, they do well; but in stopping there, they do *not* well. In not longing for, and watching for, *His reappearing*, they do *not* well. They who are looking, or professing to look, for His appearing, may forget, perhaps do too much forget, the *cross;* they may forget *Bethlehem;* they may forget that the way to look for Him, the way to be ready for Him, is "to put on the Lord Jesus, and not to make provision for the flesh." The remedy for both these evils is to be filled with His love: the love which brought Him to the earth in humility; the love which will bring Him again in glory. Let us, then, think of Him who *came*, and think of Him who *comes*. Love Him that *came*, love Him that *comes*. Rejoice that He *came*, rejoice that He *comes*. Let us rest upon the atonement accomplished at His *First* Advent; let us long for and prepare for the salvation to be brought to us at His *Second* Advent. And then let us cry, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

DECEMBER 25.

"*The Word was made flesh.*"—JOHN i. 14.

THIS day is kept in a large portion of the Christian Church in joyful celebration of the birth of Christ, —of His First Advent, when He, for our salvation, became incarnate, or took to Himself "a true body and a reasonable soul." It is well that, realising our union with all our brethren in Christ, we seek to bring our meditations this morning into sympathy with theirs, and that with them we praise God because "the Word was made flesh." Jesus came into humanity to give Himself for its deliverance; let us follow the Lamb in this, and, dwelling in the midst of humanity, let us live for its deliverance. He came into it to endure the contradiction of sinners, until He overcame them by His love and mercy; let us follow the Lamb in this, and endure the frailties of our brethren, until we overcome by love. He came into humanity to learn as a man to render obedience to Almighty God; let us follow the Lamb in this, and learn obedience in all things to the will and ordinances of God. He came into humanity to learn patience and quietness, and to wait His Father's time; let us follow the Lamb in this, and learn patience and willingness to endure whatsoever burden the Father lays upon us, so long as it seemeth good unto Him. He came into humanity with the feeling of forgiveness and good-will to all men; let us follow the Lamb in this, and, laying aside all hatred and prejudices, henceforth live with good-will to every man.

DECEMBER 26.

"*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*"—TIT. ii. 13.

LET us rejoice that there has been born in our flesh a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord—Emmanuel, God with us. Let us adore His suitableness to our every need. We are miserable sinners; He is with us as our Saviour from sin. The image of God has been defaced in humanity; He is with us to anoint us with the Spirit of the living God. We are rebellious against our Father, and ignorant of His way; He is with us to rule us, and to guide us into the way of peace. Verily it is glad tidings. It is but a little of its unspeakable gladness that we taste now; but that little we shall cherish as our life's blood. And we shall soon see the glory of Jesus, the Saviour—the Christ—the Lord. As a little babe He first appeared; but He grew in stature and in wisdom. His presence among us now is like a little babe. But, "Hark, the glad sound, the Saviour comes!" He shall fill the world with His glory. Who may abide the day of His appearing? Who shall stand before the glory of His majesty? Even they who abide in Jesus, who are hid in the cleft of the Rock. Therein dwelling, let us wait patiently for God. Let us send up our hosannahs to the Son of David. Let us not hold our peace, but cry out, "Come, O Lord."

DECEMBER 27.

"*Unto us a child is born.*"—Isa. ix. 6.

"Unto us a child is born." A child of a virgin mother! Oh, holy and adorable mystery! There is precious instruction for us in this. Let us earnestly struggle to get the power of this wondrous event into our very being. When the infinite, eternal, and almighty God came to establish the kingdom of heaven, He humbled Himself and became a little child—an infant of days. They who would enter the kingdom of heaven must become as little children. "What Thy people, O God, desire, is to be inspired with the consciousness, with the living thrill of a child's spirit." Each and every worshipper must become a little child, for of such only is the kingdom of heaven. Up into the inner sanctuary of the Most High hath been carried a Holy One,—named, a "Holy Child." Into that inner sanctuary we are invited; but not one shall be enthroned there who has not become a little child. Stay no more in the faith of conscious conversion merely. Nourish, indeed, the joyful consciousness of a heart turned unto the Lord. But waken up from slumber and from vain resting upon conversion as an historical fact. This is but the beginning unto the end. Onward! to attain unto the mystery of being the little child. For it is written, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

DECEMBER 28.

"*Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.*"
—PHIL. iv. 4.

IT is in the Lord alone we are to rejoice. There is nothing in the creature,—no righteousness, no merit, no worthiness. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the word of eternal life." And blessed be His name, there are none so vile, so wretched and guilty, but are welcome to draw near unto His presence. The Apostle reiterates the exhortation, saying, "*Again* I say, Rejoice." In this way he expresses his desire that we should hold fast and continue in Him, who alone is the salvation of His people. It implies that we may be assailed and tried with those things which would avert the eye and heart from Him. And let us be assured, that we shall experience, more and more, the necessity of this joyful trust in God as the day of the Lord's appearing approaches. Satan redoubles his efforts as the time of his overthrow draws near. Let us not marvel, then, if our faith be tried; if difficulties, disappointments, and dark providences fall to our lot. But God has made provision to help us in the midst of all these, and to help us out of them. Jesus is our peace—present peace; He is our hope —a hope that maketh not ashamed.

DECEMBER 29.

"Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand."—PHIL. iv. 5.

IT is only as we rejoice in the Lord that we can let our moderation be known unto all men. We rejoice because the Lord is at hand. He who will vindicate the cause of His people is on His way. In *that* day it will be manifest before all creation that our hope was not misplaced. Though unbelieving men—counting the cross foolishness, and the hope of the gospel a dream—say, "Where is now your God?" yet His faithful people can quietly hope, and patiently wait, for the salvation of God. They who are thus rejoicing and waiting for the Lord's appearing can show true moderation in a time when men are carried about with the intoxicating delusions and plausible schemes of present felicity and future progress, or are filled with perplexity as to the issue of events. They whose hope the Lord is will be found calmly and steadfastly fulfilling the duties of the place which God has assigned them, in the assured confidence that He that shall come will come, and will not tarry, and that they who trust in Him shall never be confounded. We have peace in present trials, because we have hope of better things to come.

DECEMBER 30.

"Blessed is that servant whom His lord when He cometh shall find so doing."—LUKE xii. 43.

WHEN God appeared to Enoch, he was found "walking with God." When He appeared to Moses, he was quietly tending sheep committed to his charge; when to Samuel, he was ministering to Eli; when to David, he was following his occupation as a shepherd; when to Zacharias, he was fulfilling his course in the temple; when to Mary, she was quietly performing her duty as a maiden; when to John and James and Peter, they were engaged in fishing; and when to John in Patmos, he was patiently enduring his captivity. These, and such-like instances convey solemn lessons to us. We are called upon to wait for the appearing of Jesus. These records are written to teach us that we are best prepared to receive the Lord when we are quietly abiding in the place God has given to us, and diligently performing the duties thereof. Whether our place in the eye of man be high or low, important or unimportant, let us stand fast in quietness and confidence; let us seek to fulfil it, conscious of our unworthiness, but having all our faith in the blood and work of Christ. Then when the King cometh He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

DECEMBER 31.

"The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."—1 PETER iv. 7.

IT is solemn to pass from one season to another. It speaks of the rapid flight of the time given us in which to do the work of the Lord. It speaks of the approach of the day when we shall be called upon to meet the Lord. As this day we close another year, let us come before the Lord with penitent hearts for all the ways by which we have grieved Him. Let us be contrite, remembering how many times He knocked and has not been admitted—how many times He has cried, "Open to Me," and has not been received.

It is truly humbling, O Lord, that full and sole possession of our hearts has not been granted unto Thee. We have not yielded to be blessed by Thee; we have not given ourselves wholly into Thy hands that we might be blessings unto others. But we are sorry, very sorry; we bow our heads and hearts in the dust, looking to the merits of the blood of atonement for pardon and for power to amend our ways.

To God the Father, and the Son,
All praise, and power, and glory be,
With Thee, O Holy Comforter,
Henceforth, through all eternity!

Amen.

THE END.

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